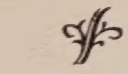
GUY DE MAUPASSANT

Mont-Oriol



POPULAR EDITION SERIES

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MONT-ORIOL

PART I

CHAPTER I

THE GREAT SPRING

FRESH from the baths, the early risers walked slowly, two by two or alone, under the great trees beside the brook that flows through the gorge of Enval.

Others coming from the village entered the building with a hurried air. It was a large structure, with the ground-floor reserved for hot baths; the upper for a casino and a café.

After Dr. Bonnefille's discovery in the depths of Enval of the great spring christened by him "Bonnefille," some land-owners in the vicinity had decided to erect the building as a health and pleasure resort. It lay in the midst of a superb valley of Auvergne. The mineral waters, showers and baths were furnished on the first story, and above, beer, wines and music. Part of the ravine along the brook had been enclosed as a park in which three paths were laid out, one nearly straight, the others winding. At the end of the first played a little fountain fed from the main spring, which bub-

bled up in a large cement basin sheltered by a straw roof, and was presided over by an impassive woman whom everyone called Marie. This placid woman of Auvergne, wearing a little cap always snowy white and nearly covered by a large apron always very clean, that hid her working dress, slowly rose when she saw a bather coming towards her. As soon as she recognized him, she picked out his glass from a little movable, glazed cupboard, and calmly filled it with a zinc dipper.

The gloomy bather smiled, drank and returned the glass with, "Thanks, Marie!" then turned away. And Marie seated herself again on her chair to wait on the next comer.

Indeed, there were not many.

The resort at Enval had been open for invalids for only six years, and had few more patients at the close of this time than at the very first. About fifty came. These were attracted chiefly by the beauty of the country and the charm of the little village, amid the shadow of gigantic trees, whose gnarled trunks seemed as large as the houses. Besides this they were drawn there by the fame of the gorges at the end of the weird valley, which opens on the great plain of Auvergne and ends abruptly, at the foot of a high mountain studded with ancient craters, in a wild rift filled with fallen and overhanging rocks. Here a brook cascades over giant boulders forming before each a miniature lake.

This hot-springs resort had begun as they all do through a circular by Dr. Bonnefille describing the spring. He first set forth in praise of the Alpine charms of the country in a stately and sentimental style. He used only choice adjectives which give effect and tell nothing. All the surroundings were picturesque, with majestic views of landscapes of

familiar loveliness. All the nearby walks were remarkable for their original charms, which would captivate the fancy of artists and tourists. Then suddenly, with no transition, he descended to the therapeutics of the Bonnefille spring: carbonated, with blended soda and lithia, acidulated, ferruginous, etc., and with power to heal all diseases. He had also enumerated the latter under the title, " Chronic or acute diseases specially calling for the Enval treatment," and this list was long and varied, consolatory to all classes of invalids. The circular ended with useful practical information, price of lodgings, cost of living and of hotels. For three hotels had sprung up at the same time as the medical casino. They were the Grand Hotel, quite new, built on the side of the valley facing the baths; the Hot Springs Hotel, an old inn refurnished, and the Vidaillet Hotel, made simply by purchasing three neighboring houses and throwing them open into one.

Then two doctors were found settled in the place the very same morning, without anyone's knowing just how they had come, for doctors at water resorts seem to rise from the springs like bubbles of gas. They were Dr. Honorat of Auvergne and Dr. Latonne of Paris. A fierce hatred at once flared up between Dr. Latonne and Dr. Bonnefille; but Dr. Honorat, a large, clean, smooth-shaven man, smiling and easy going, gave his right hand to the first, his left to the second, and stayed on good terms with both. Dr. Bonnefille, however, was master of the situation by virtue of his title of inspector of the waters and of the hot-springs casino of Enval-les-Bains.

This title was his power, and the casino was his life-work. There he passed his days, even his nights,

it was said. A hundred times in the morning he went from his house nearby in the village to his office on the right side of the entrance of the lobby. Ambushed there, like a spider in its web, he watched the comings and goings of the patients, looking at his own with a stern eye and at those of the others with an angry mien. He challenged everybody, almost like a captain at sea, and terrified new comers —unless he made them smile.

Just as he was arriving that day at such a rapid pace that the long tails of his old frock coat fluttered like wings, he was stopped short by a voice calling "Doctor!"

He turned. His thin face furrowed with deep, ill-natured wrinkles seeming black in their hollows, marred by a grizzly beard rarely trimmed, essayed to smile. He raised the silk hat, shabby, spotted, greasy, with which he covered his long pepper-and-salt shock of hair—"pepper and soiled," said his rival, Dr. Latonne. Then he stepped forward and bowing, murmured:

"Good morning, Marquis; are you feeling well this morning?"

The Marquis of Ravenel, a little, well-groomed man, held out his hand to the doctor and answered:

"Very well, doctor, very well, or rather, not badly. I suffer constantly with my back, but after all I am better, much better, although I am only at my tenth bath. Last year I felt no relief until the sixteenth, do you remember?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"But it is not about that that I want to speak to you. My daughter arrived this morning and I would like to consult you first on this subject because my son-in-law, M. Andermatt, William Andermatt, the banker——"

"Yes, I know."

"My son-in-law has a letter of introduction to Dr. Latonne. But I have confidence only in you, and I hope you will be so good as to go up to the hotel before—you understand—I would rather speak frankly—are you at liberty now?"

Dr. Bonnefille, much agitated and very uneasy, replaced his hat. He replied at once.

"Yes, I am at leisure. Would you like me to go with you?"

"If you please."

Leaving the casino behind them, they walked rapidly up the graded path leading to the Grand Hotel, which was built on the slope of the mountain so that the guests might enjoy the view.

On the second story they entered the private sitting-room of the Ravenel and Andermatt families, and the Marquis left the doctor a moment alone, while he went to find his daughter.

He returned with her almost at once. She was a blonde young woman, petite, pale, very pretty, with features like a child's, while her daring blue eyes threw resolute glances that gave a charming air of firmness and a striking character to this tiny, dainty lady. She had no serious illness, only ill-defined symptoms—melancholy, fits of causeless crying, irritability—in short, anæmia. She wished above all things for a child, which she had vainly hoped for during the three years she had been married.

Dr. Bonnefille assured them that the springs of Enval were sovereign remedies. He at once wrote down his prescriptions, which always had as imposing an air as a public prosecutor's address to the court.

These prescriptions spread over many paragraphs of several lines each, on a large, white sheet

of foolscap paper, and were crazily written in characters like bristling sword-points. Then the draughts, the pills, the powders that one should take fasting morning, noon, and night followed fiercely in procession.

One expected to read: "Whereas: Monsieur X. is overtaken by an incurable and fatal chronic disease,

"He must take: 1st. Sulphate of quinine, to cause deafness and loss of memory.

"2d. Bromide of potassium, to destroy his stomach, weaken his faculties, cause a rash, and fetid breath.

"3d. Iodide of potassium which, desiccating all the glands of his body and brain, will leave him in a short time as helpless as an imbecile.

"4th. Salicylate of soda, of uncertain curative powers, but which seems to lead patients to a terrible and sudden death.

"And in connection with these:

"Chloral that causes madness, belladonna which affects the eyes, all the plant and mineral drugs which corrupt the blood, corrode the organs, gnaw the bones, and cause death to all those whom disease itself has spared."

He wrote a long time on the front and back of the page and then signed it like a magistrate signing a death sentence.

The young woman sitting opposite watched him with a smile curving the corners of her lips.

The moment he left the room after a grand bow she caught up the ink-blackened paper, rolled it into a ball, tossed it into the fireplace, and, laughing merrily, said: "Oh! father, where did you discover this old fossil? Why, he has all the air of an old-clothes man! Oh! how good you are to unearth this doctor

of the days before the Revolution. Oh, how droll he is!—and dirty—yes, indeed, dirty! I truly believe that he has soiled my penholder."

The door opened, and M. Andermatt was heard calling: "Walk in, doctor." And Dr. Latonne entered. Erect, slender, elegant, rather young, dressed in a handsome little jacket, and holding the silk hat which marks the practising doctor at the hot springs of Auvergne, the smooth-shaven Parisian doctor looked like an actor visiting the country.

The Marquis, much confused, did not know what to say or do. To hide her laughter, his daughter pretended to cough. The visitor bowed with an air of assurance and took a seat at the young lady's invitation. M. Andermatt followed him into the room and at once entered into a long description of his wife's symptoms, the opinions of the doctors consulted in Paris, and his own, based on special reasons and expressed in technical terms.

He was still very young, a Jew, and a typical business man. He carried on a varied business and grasped every detail with a versatility, rapidity of penetration, and sureness of decision that were simply marvelous. Short and stout, bald, with a round baby face and fat hands, he looked too florid for health. He talked with astonishing fluency.

To extend his business relations in higher circles of society he had shrewdly married the daughter of the Marquis of Ravenel. Besides, the Marquis had about thirty thousand francs of income and only two children. Andermatt, however, when he married at hardly thirty years of age had already five or six millions, and had investments from which he would realize ten or twelve. M. de Ravenel, a vacillating and weak man, first angrily repelled the overtures of marriage, indignant at the thought of his

daughter's marrying a Jew. Then, after six months of opposition, he yielded under the pressure of wealth, on condition that the children should be brought up in the Catholic faith.

As yet, however, there were none. Then the Marquis, who was very enthusiastic for the past two years over the Enval springs, remembered that the circular of Dr. Bonnefille held out hopes to those that were childless.

So he sent at once for his daughter and her husband, to bring her down and to confide her, under the advice of their Paris physician, to the care of Dr. Latonne. Thus it was that Andermatt from the moment he arrived had looked for the doctor and described to him at length his wife's symptoms. He ended by saying how disappointed he was to have no children.

Dr. Latonne allowed him to finish, then, turning to the young woman said:

"Is there anything you would like to add, Madam?"

She replied gravely:

"No, nothing."

He resumed:

"Then may I ask you to change your dress for a simple white wrapper?"

As she was surprised, he briefly explained his method:

"Mon Dieu, Madam, it is very simple! The old physicians thought that all diseases were caused by disorder of the blood or by organic trouble. We now think that often, especially in such cases as yours, the vague symptoms from which you suffer and even very grave or fatal troubles can arise simply from the following cause. If some organ attains, from reasons which are difficult to deter-

mine, an abnormal development to the detriment of its neighbors, it destroys all the harmony and balance of the human body. Physiological functions are modified or arrested and the play of all the other organs is impeded.

" Thus a mere distension of the stomach may result in symptoms which would lead one to think there was heart trouble, for the action of the heart is obstructed and becomes irregular or intermittent. Enlargements of the liver or of certain glands may cause the patient to fall into a decline which doctors who are not observing may attribute to a thousand strange causes.

" For this reason, first, we determine whether all a patient's organs are normal in size and position, for a trifling deviation will upset a person's health. So, with your permission, Madam, I will carefully examine you and chalk down on your wrapper the sizes and positions of your organs."

He had placed his hat on a chair and spoke in an easy manner. His large mouth, as it opened and closed, formed two deep furrows in his shaven cheeks which gave him quite an ecclesiastical air.

Andermatt, perfectly delighted, exclaimed: " Well, well, that's fine, very ingenious, very new, very modern."

" Very modern," from his lips, expressed the highest admiration.

The young woman, much amused, rose, retired to her room and soon reappeared in a white wrapper.

The doctor placed her on a sofa, then he drew from his pocket a red, blue, and black colored pencil. He began to tap his new patient, chalking the wrapper to record each observation.

After a quarter of an hour of this work she looked like a geographical map with the continents,

seas, capes, rivers, countries, and cities, with the names of the political divisions, for the doctor wrote on each boundary two or three Latin words understood only by himself.

When he had finished, he drew from his pocket a red leather notebook tied with gold strings and arranged alphabetically. He turned to the page and wrote: " Examination No. 6,347.—Mme. Andermatt —age 21."

Then he studied his diagram in colors sketched on the wrapper, like an Egyptologist deciphering hieroglyphics, and entered it in his notebook.

He gave his opinion when this was done: " Nothing alarming, nothing abnormal except a slight, very slight deviation that thirty acidulated baths will cure. In addition you should take every morning before noon three small glasses of water. Nothing more. I will call again to see you in four or five days." And rising, he bowed and withdrew so suddenly that everyone was amazed. He cultivated this brusk way of leaving as his particular style. For he thought it extremely good form, and that it made a great impression on the patients.

Madame Andermatt ran to look at herself in the mirror, and shook with the merry laughter of a happy child as she said:

" Oh, how funny they are, how droll! Tell me, is there another? I want to see him right away. Will, do go and find him for me. There should be a third. I want to see him."

Her husband asked in surprise:

" What do you mean by a third—a third what? "

The Marquis had to explain, with many excuses, for he was a little afraid of his son-in-law. He told how Dr. Bonnefille had come to call on him and that he had then consulted the doctor in regard to Chris-

tiane, for he had great confidence in the experience of the old man, who was a native of the place, and had discovered the spring.

Andermatt shrugged his shoulders and declared that Dr. Latonne only should take care of his wife. So the Marquis began to think very anxiously how he could arrange matters so as not to offend his irascible doctor.

In the meantime Christiane asked, "Is Gontran here?" He was her brother.

Her father replied:

"Yes, he came four days ago with one of his friends of whom he has often spoken to us, M. Paul Bretigny. They are making a tour of Auvergne together, and arrived here from Mount Doré and the Bourboule and leave for Cantal at the close of next week."

Then he asked his daughter if she would like to rest until luncheon, after the night on the train; but she had slept very well in the sleeping-car, and asked only for an hour in which to dress. Then she would like to visit the village and the casino.

Her father and her husband went to their rooms to wait until she was ready.

She soon sent for them and they all went off together. At first she was all enthusiasm over the village built in the forest and the deep valley which seemed shut in on all sides by chestnut trees as high as hills. One saw these everywhere, left to their chance growth of four centuries, in front of the doors, in the courts, in the streets. Then everywhere around were fountains made of a large black stone standing on end and pierced with a small hole, from which gushed a thread of clear water that fell into a watering trough. A fresh smell of the kine was wafted under all this verdure. Walking soberly in

the streets or standing in front of their houses one saw the women of Auvergne spinning, with deft fingers, black wool on a distaff, the end of which they rested against their waists. Their short skirts revealed their thin ankles covered with blue stockings, and their waists, held at the shoulders by a sort of bretelles, showed the linen sleeves of their chemisettes, from which projected their hard, leathery arms and bony hands.

But suddenly strange music burst on the ears of the strollers. One would have said a wheezy barrel organ—a barrel organ all used up, broken-winded, good for nothing.

Christiane exclaimed:

"What on earth is that?"

Her father laughingly replied:

"It is the orchestra of the casino. It takes four to make that noise."

And he led her to a red placard, pasted on the corner of a farm house, which bore in black letters the legend:

CASINO D'ENVAL

Under the direction of M. Petrus Martel of the Odéon.

Saturday, July 6th.—Grand concert arranged by the *maëstro* Saint-Landri who received the second grand prize of the Conservatory. Pianist, M. Javel, first laureate of the Conservatory.

Flutist.—M. Noirot, laureate of the Conservatory.

Double-bass.—M. Nicordi, laureate of the Royal Academy of Brussels.

After the concert, a grand performance will be given of:

LOST IN THE FOREST

Comedy in one act

By M. Pointillet.

CHARACTERS:

Pierre de Lapointe.....MM. Petrus Martel, of the Odéon
Oscar Leveille.....Petitnivelle, of the Vaudeville
Jean.....Lapalme, of the Grand Theatre of Bordeaux
Philippine.....Mlle. Odelin, of the Odéon

During the performance the orchestra will also be conducted by the maëstro Saint-Landri.

Christiane read this aloud, laughed, and wondered what it would be like.

Her father resumed:

"Oh, they will amuse you! Come, let us go and see them."

They turned to the right and entered the park. The bathers were walking solemnly, slowly, on the three paths, drinking their glass of water, then leaving. Some sitting on the benches traced lines in the sand with the ends of their canes or umbrellas. They did not talk at all, seemed not to think at all, and scarcely alive, were benumbed, paralyzed by the *ennui* of the hot-springs resorts. Only the bizarre sound of the orchestra, jangling through the calm, sweet air under the dense foliage, coming one knew not whence, made one knew not how, seemed to give motion to these sad walkers.

A voice called, "Christiane!" She turned and found it was her brother. He ran up and embraced her and shook hands with Andermatt. Then he took his sister's arm and led her on, leaving his father and his brother-in-law behind.

The brother and sister talked together. He was a fine-looking fellow, elegant, merry like herself, changeable like the Marquis, careless, but always had an eye to the almighty dollar.

"I thought you were sleeping," he said, "or I would have called to greet you. Then, too, Paul took me off this morning to the Château of Tournoël."

"Who is Paul? Oh, yes, your friend."

"Paul Bretigny. That's true, you do not know him. He is taking a bath just now."

"He is ill?"

"No, but he is undergoing a cure all the same. He has lately been in love."

"And he takes acidulated baths—they say acidulated, don't they—to revive himself?"

"Yes, he does everything I tell him to do. Oh, he was hard hit! He is a violent, tragic fellow. He came near dying. He wanted to kill her, too. She was an actress—a well-known actress. He loved her madly. Then she was clearly unfaithful to him. It made an overwhelming tragedy. Then I took him away. He is better now, but he still thinks of her."

She had been smiling a moment before, now, grown suddenly serious, she answered:

"It would interest me to meet him."

But, indeed, "Love" did not mean much to her. She sometimes thought of it, as one dreams, when one is poor, of a necklace of pearls, of a diamond tiara, with a wakening desire for this possible yet remote object. She pictured it to herself from some novels she had read, for lack of anything else to do, and did not look upon it as a matter of much moment. She was not given to dreaming, for she had been born with a happy disposition, quiet and satisfied. Although she had been married for two and a half years, she had not yet wakened from that sleep in which artless young girls live—that sleep of the heart, of the mind, and of the senses which in some women continue to the day of their death. Life seemed to her simple and good with no complications, for she never sought the why or the wherefore. She lived, slept, dressed with taste, smiled, and was content. What more could be asked of her?

When Andermatt was suggested as her betrothed, she first refused with childish rage to be the wife of a Jew. Her father and brother, sharing her aversion, joined her in a formal refusal. Andermatt disappeared, counterfeited death; but at the end of three months she had lent more than twenty thou-

sand francs to Gontran, and the Marquis for other reasons commenced to change his opinion. To begin with, he always yielded when one insisted, from a selfish love of rest. His daughter said of him, "Oh, all papa's ideas are jumbled up," and this was true. With no fixed opinions or beliefs, he had only sudden enthusiasms, which changed every instant. At times he surrendered himself, with a fleeting and poetic exaltation, to the old traditions of his race and wanted a king, but a king wise, liberal, enlightened, keeping abreast with the progress of the century. Then again, after reading a volume of Michelet or of some democratic thinker, he longed ardently for the equality of men, for modern ideals, for a realization of the claims of the poor, the oppressed and the suffering. He believed anything at different times. So when his old friend, Madame Icardon, who was connected with many Jews, wished the marriage of Christiane and Andermatt to take place, she knew very well by what line of reasoning to follow up the attack. She showed him the Jewish race as now at the hour of vengeance. A race that had been crushed, as had been the French before the Revolution, but which now would oppress others by the power of wealth. The Marquis, who was without religious belief, was fully convinced that the conception of God was purely a legislative idea stronger in governing the foolish, ignorant, and timid than the idea of justice alone. He regarded all dogmas with respectful tolerance, and held in equally sincere esteem Confucius, Mohammed, and Jesus Christ. Thus the fact of having crucified Christ did not seem to him at all as an unparalleled crime, but as a great political blunder. Consequently, it took only a few weeks to gain his admiration for the hidden, incessant, invincible work of the Jews, who are every-

where persecuted. And suddenly seeing their remarkable triumph from another point of view, he regarded it as a just reparation for their long humiliation. He saw them as the rulers of kings who are rulers of nations, supporting thrones or letting them fall, with power to bankrupt a nation as one might a wine merchant. Proud in the presence of humbled princes, they throw their sordid gold into the gaping purses of the most catholic sovereigns, who reward them with titles of nobility and with railroads.

And he consented to the marriage of William Andermatt and Christiane de Ravenel.

As for her, she was under the pressure, of which she was unaware, of Madame Icardon's influence. This lady was an old playmate of her mother, and had become Christiane's closest adviser since the death of the Marquise. To her influence was added the persuasion of her father and the selfish interest of her brother. So she agreed to marry this rich, fat fellow, who was not ugly, but did not please her at all, just as she would have consented to spend a summer in an unattractive place.

Now she thought him a good fellow, agreeable, not stupid, always polite; but she often laughed at him with Gontran, who was ungrateful to him.

He said to her:

"Your husband is rosier and balder than ever. He looks like a sickly flower or a sucking pig just shaved. How does he get these brilliant colors?"

She replied:

"I assure you that I have nothing to do with it. Some days I feel just like pasting him on to a box of candied fruits."

Then they arrived at the front of the bathing establishment.

Two men were seated on cane bottomed chairs placed against the wall on each side of the door, and were smoking their pipes.

Gontran said:

"Look, those are two interesting types. See that one on the right, the hunchback, decked out in a Greek cap. That is old Père Printemps, once jailer at Riom, and now the caretaker, almost the director of the Enval casino. To him there has been no change, for he governs the patients just as he ruled over his former prisoners. The bathers are the prisoners, the bath-rooms are the cells, the shower-room a dungeon, and the place where Dr. Bonnefille washes out the patients' stomachs with the Baraduc tube a mysterious room of tortures. He speaks to no one, because of his theory that all under sentence are despicable creatures. He looks upon the women with more interest—that is, interest mingled with wonder, for he had none under his care in the Riom prison. That retreat is designed only for men, so he has never yet become used to speaking to members of the fair sex. The other man is the bookkeeper. I defy you to make him write your name; you will see."

And Gontran, speaking to the man on the left, slowly and distinctly said:

"Monsieur Seminois, this is my sister, Mme. Andermatt, who would like to buy tickets for twelve baths."

The bookkeeper, who was very tall and very thin, with a poverty-stricken look, rose and went into his office opposite to that of the medical inspector. He opened his book and asked:

"What name?"

"Andermatt."

"You said?"

"Andermatt."

"How do you spell it?"

"A-n-d-e-r-m-a-t-t."

"All right."

And he slowly wrote it down. When he had finished, Gontran asked:

"Will you please read aloud to me my sister's name?"

"Yes, sir, Mme. Anterpat."

Christiane, laughing until she cried, paid for her tickets, then asked:

"What is that commotion that we hear up there?"

Gontran took her arm and said:

"Come and see."

The sound of two angry voices was heard coming down the stairs. They went up, opened a door, and saw a large café with a billiard table in the center. Two men in their shirt-sleeves with cues in their hands stood at two sides of the table and inveighed against one another.

"Eighteen!"

"Seventeen!"

"I tell you I have eighteen!"

"That's not true, you have only seventeen!"

It was the director of the casino, M. Petrus Martel, playing his usual game of billiards with the comic actor, M. Lapalme, of the Grand Theatre of Bordeaux.

Petrus Martel, whose huge flabby stomach shook under his shirt above his pantaloons, fastened up no one knew how, had been a strolling player. After he took the management of the casino of Enval he passed his days in consuming the drinks designed for the bathers. He wore an immense military mustache, steeped from morning till night in the foam

of beer and the sticky syrup of liqueurs. He had roused in the old comic actor, who was one of his recruits, an insatiable love of billiards.

They were scarcely out of bed before they began to play, with abuse and threats towards one another. They hardly took time for breakfast. Never could they be routed from the green cloth by any two patients.

Thus they seemed to live apart from everyone. But they did not find life at all wretched, although bankruptcy at the close of the season was staring Petrus Martel in the face.

The dejected bookkeeper watched this interminable play from morning till night, heard from morning till night this endless discussion, and carried from morning till night chops or little glasses of cordials to the indefatigable players.

But Gontran drew his sister away, saying:

"Come in the park. It's cooler there."

Suddenly they caught sight of the orchestra at the end of the building in a Chinese kiosk.

A fair young man played the violin with frenzy. He conducted the three queer-looking musicians facing him by movements of his head, of his locks of hair swaying to the measures, and by his whole body waving back and forth, right and left, like an orchestra leader's baton. This was the *maëstro,* Saint-Landri.

One of his assistants was a pianist, whose instrument was wheeled in on rollers every morning from the hall of the bathing establishment to the kiosk. Another was an enormous flutist, who looked as if he were sucking a match as he tickled it with his puffy, fat fingers. The third was a double-bass who looked consumptive. The *maëstro* and these three together produced, with great fatigue, the perfect

imitation of a wheezy barrel-organ that had startled Christiane in the village street.

As she stood watching them a gentleman spoke to her brother.

"Good-morning, my dear Count."

"Good-morning, doctor."

And Gontran introduced them:

"My sister, Dr. Honorat."

She could hardly restrain her merriment as she faced this third doctor.

He bowed, and said in a complimentary way:

"I hope that Madame is not ill?"

"Yes, a little."

He did not pursue the subject and changed the conversation.

"You know, my dear Count, that you will soon see one of the most interesting sights that has happened ever since the very beginning of the place."

"What can it be, doctor?"

"Père Oriol, the richest peasant of all the country around, who is known to have more than fifty thousand francs of income, owns all the vineyards where the Enval brook flows out over the plain. And just at the end of the village, where the valley turns, is a little hill, or rather, high knoll, and on this knoll are Père Oriol's best vineyards. In one of these, close by the road, two steps from the brook, is a gigantic rock that hinders cultivation and casts a shadow over all that part of the field that it overlooks.

"For ten years Père Oriol has said every week that he would blow up this rock, but he has never reached the point of doing it.

"Every time a country boy left for the army, the old man said to him: 'When you come back on leave, bring me some powder for that rock of mine.'

" And all the young soldiers would bring back in their knapsacks powder stolen for Père Oriol's rock. He had a whole chest full—yet the rock was never blown up.

" At last, for the past week—he had been seen drilling the rock with his son, tall Jacques, nicknamed Colosse, which they pronounced in Auvergne ' Coloche.' That very morning they had filled the hole drilled in the center of the rock with powder, then they closed the opening, leaving only a passage for the fuse which had been bought from the tobacconist's. They planned to light it at two o'clock. It should go off at five minutes past two, or ten minutes past at the latest, for the fuse was long."

Christiane was interested in this story, and was at once pleased with the idea of blasting, which recalled childish sports that delighted her simple heart.

Then they reached the end of the park.

" What would one come to further on? " she asked.

Dr. Honorat replied: " To the End of the World, Madame—that is to say, to a gorge with no outlet, which is very famous in Auvergne. It is one of the finest natural curiosities of the country."

But a clock struck behind them. Gontran exclaimed: " What, time for luncheon already! " So they turned back.

A tall young man came to meet them.

Gontran said:

" My little Christiane, I would like to introduce to you M. Paul Bretigny."

To his friend he said:

" This is my sister, my dear fellow."

She thought he was very plain. He had straight black hair, closely cropped, and eyes that were too round with an expression that was almost hard. His

head was too round also and very strong—one of those heads that make one think of cannon balls. His shoulders were herculean. His whole appearance struck one as somewhat wild, heavy and brutal. But a very subtle and delicate perfume exhaled from his clothing. The young lady did not recognize it, and she thought to herself: "What kind of fragrance is that?"

He addressed her:

"You came this morning, Madame?"

His voice was a trifle dull.

She answered, "Yes."

At that moment Gontran saw the Marquis and Andermatt motioning to them to come back quickly to lunch.

Then Dr. Honorat took leave of them, asking if they really intended to go to see the big rock blasted away.

Christiane assured him that she would go, and as she leaned on her brother's arm she whispered, as she drew him back:

"I am as hungry as a wolf. I shall be ashamed to eat so much before your friend."

CHAPTER II

A GRAND DISCOVERY

LUNCHEON took a long time, as *table d'hôte* meals do. As Christiane did not know the people at the table, she talked with her father and her brother. Then she rested until time for the blasting.

She was ready long before the hour, and made everybody start early, so as to be sure not to miss the explosion.

Near the edge of the village at the opening of the valley there was a knoll, really quite a hill, that they climbed up in the hot sun, following a little foot-path between the vineyards. When they reached the top, the young woman uttered a cry of astonishment at the wide vista suddenly unfolded. Before her spread a vast plain which at once suggested the ocean. This plain, which was veiled by a light haze, blue and soft, extended to the far-off mountains, hardly visible, perhaps fifty or sixty kilometers away. Beneath this light mist that floated over the vast expanse of country, one saw towns, villages, woods, great yellow fields of ripe harvests, green meadows, factories with high chimneys, and steeples built from the lava of ancient volcanoes.

"Turn around," said her brother. She turned. Then behind her she saw the lofty mountain studded with craters. There was first the background of Enval, a great wave of verdure in which one barely

distinguished the hidden rifts of the gorges. The flood of foliage scaled the steep slope up to the first crater, which concealed from sight those above. But just at the boundary between the plains and the mountain, the latter stretched out to the left towards Clermont-Farrand, and reaching far into the distance displayed against the blue sky strange truncated peaks—dead volcanoes. And there, far over, between two peaks, one perceived yet another, loftier height, more distant still, rounded and majestic, with a strange object on its summit that looked like a ruin.

This was the Puy de Dome, the monarch of the mountains of Auvergne. Massive and mighty, it guarded on its brow, as a crown placed there by the greatest of nations, the remnants of a Roman temple.

Christiane exclaimed: "Oh! how happy I shall be here!" Indeed, she felt happy already. For she was pervaded with that feeling of ease and freedom of body and soul that makes one breathe freely, makes one alert and light-footed, when one suddenly reaches a place that delights the eye, charms and cheers one, that seems to have been waiting for one, and for which one feels one was born.

Some one called, "Madame, madame!" Then she saw, a short distance away, Dr. Honorat, who was easily recognized by his tall hat. He hastened to them and led them to the other side of the hill. Here was a grassy slope beside a thicket of low trees, where about thirty persons, strangers and peasants mingled, were already waiting.

Below them the hill sloped steeply down to the road to Riom. This was shaded by willows that overhung the narrow, bordering brook. In the center of a vineyard skirting the brook was a high, pointed rock at the foot of which two men were

kneeling as though in prayer. This was the giant rock.

The Oriols, father and son, were just attaching the fuse. A curious crowd, with an advance line of excited gamins, was watching them.

Dr. Honorat chose a comfortable place for Christiane, who seated herself with her heart beating as excitedly as if she were going to see whole crowd blown into the air. The Marquis, Andermatt and Paul Bretigny lay on the grass near the young lady, while Gontran stood beside them. He said jokingly:

"My dear doctor, you must be much less busy than your colleagues, who certainly have not an hour to lose in watching this little celebration."

Honorat answered good-humoredly:

"I am no less busy, but my patients take up less of my time. And then I would always rather amuse them than give them medicines."

He had a humorous way that pleased Gontran greatly.

More people constantly came. Among them were people from the dining-table, the Paille ladies, two widows, mother and daughter, and a very short, fat man, who was breathing like a bursting boiler. He was M. Aubry-Pasteur, a former mining engineer who had made a fortune in Paris.

The Marquis and this gentleman had become acquainted. He seated himself with great care, with many cautious, preparatory movements with which Christiane was greatly amused. Gontran had gone further on to look at the rest of the people, who like themselves had come out of curiosity to the knoll.

Paul Bretigny pointed out to Christiane Andermatt the places seen in the distance. The nearest was Riom, that made a red spot of tiles on the plain, then came Ennezat, Maringues and Lezoux. Then

there were many villages that could hardly be distinguished, that made only small dark holes in the green cloth of verdure. Finally, far, far off, at the base of the mountains of Forez, he tried to point out to her Thiers.

He said in an animated way:

"Look, see, just where my finger is pointing. I see it so clearly myself."

She could not see it at all, but she was not surprised that he could, for his eyes looked like those of a bird of prey, round and fixed. One felt that they were as powerful as marine telescopes.

He continued:

"The Allier flows in the midst of the plain before us, but it is not possible to see it. It is too distant, at thirty kilometers from us."

She really hardly tried to distinguish what he pointed out, for her eyes and thoughts were all centered on the great rock. She thought to herself that in a short time the huge rock would be no more, that it would be blown away in dust, and she was touched with the vague pity of a little girl for a broken plaything. It had been there for such a long time, this poor stone, and it was so pretty and harmless. The two men, who had now risen, were shoveling gravel around the base with the rapid movements of peasants when in a hurry.

The crowd on the road, which had constantly grown, came nearer to watch. The gamins capered about, dodging around the workmen like young animals at play. From the height where Christiane was seated the people looked very small, like a swarm of ants at work. The murmur of voices rose, sometimes low, barely audible, but at times louder. It was then a confused clamor of calls and movements of the people, but broken by the distance, attenuated

so as to be mere shattered fragments of sound. The crowd on the knoll was increased. The people came in a stream from the village and covered the slope which commanded a view of the condemned rock.

They called to one another and sat together by hotels, classes and castes. The noisiest of these groups was that of the actors and musicians, presided over by their director, Petrus Martel of the Odéon, who on this occasion had deserted his furious play of billiards.

With a panama on his head, his shoulders covered with a black alpaca coat that let his great white stomach stand out like a hump—for he thought a waistcoat unnecessary in the fields—the actor with the mustachios took on the air of a commander, and pointed out, explained and commented on all the movements of the Oriols. His subordinates, the comic actor Lapalme, Petitnivelle, who took the part of the lovers, and the musicians, the *maëstro* Saint-Landri, the pianist Javel, the huge flutist Noirot, and the double-bass Nicordi, all surrounded and listened to him. In front of them three women sat sheltered by three parasols, one white, one red, and one blue, that made under the early afternoon sun an odd and dazzling French flag. They were Mlle. Odelin, the actress who took the part of heroines, her mother, who was hired, Gontran said, and the cashier of the café, who usually accompanied these ladies. The arrangement of the parasols in the national colors was an invention of Petrus Martel, who after he had seen the blue and the white ones carried by the Odelin ladies, made a present of the red one to his cashier.

Near them another group drew as much attention and notice as they. It was that of the chefs

and scullions of the hotels, eight in number, who were trying to see which of them could most impress the crowd, from the bad cooks in linen jackets down to their dish washers. As they all stood up, the full light of day fell on their flat caps, and they had at once the aspect of a strange-looking staff of white lancers and of a delegation of cooks.

The Marquis asked Dr. Honorat:

"Where do all these people come from? I should never have thought there were so many in Enval."

"Oh, they have come from all the region round, from Châtel-Guyon, Tournoël, la Roche-Pradière, and Saint-Hippolyte. For, you know, for a long time this event has been the talk of the country. Then Père Oriol is quite a celebrity and an influential man because of his wealth. Besides, he is a true man of Auvergne, who has always stayed a peasant, working himself, economizing, saving up money, trustworthy with money, intelligent, full of ideas and plans for his children."

Gontran returned, excited, his eyes sparkling. He said in a low tone:

"Paul, Paul, come with me. I will show you two pretty girls; oh, yes, very pretty indeed, you know."

The other raised his head and answered:

"My dear fellow, I am very comfortable here. I won't stir."

"You are making a mistake. They are charming."

Then raising his voice he said:

"The doctor will tell me who they are. Two young girls eighteen or nineteen years old, looking like country ladies, oddly dressed in black silk dresses with tight-fitting sleeves, dresses that look like uniforms, nun's robes, two brunettes——"

Dr. Honorat interrupted:

"That is enough. They are the daughters of Père Oriol, two fine girls, educated by the black nuns of Clermont. They will make splendid matches. They are two types, but two good types of our race, of the good race of Auvergne, for I am a man of Auvergne, Marquis, and I will show you those two young girls over there——"

Gontran interrupted him mischievously:

"Are you the physician of the Oriol family, doctor?"

The other saw through his meaning, and answered simply, "Parbleu!" very merrily.

The young man continued:

"How did you manage to gain the confidence of this rich patient?"

"By prescribing that he should drink a great deal of good wine."

Then he gossiped about the Oriols. He was distantly related to them, and had known them for a long time. The old man, the father, was quite a character. He was very proud of his wine, and he had one vineyard in particular from which all the wine produced had to be consumed by the family, by no one but the family and their guests. Some years they easily emptied the casks that this choice vineyard supplied, but other years they only did so by great efforts.

About the month of May or June, when Père Oriol saw that he would have a hard time drinking up all that was left, he began to urge on his tall son, Colosse, saying: "Come, boy, it must be finished." Then they commenced to pour down their throats litres of red wine from morning till night. Twenty times during each meal the good man said gravely, as he tipped the jug against his son's glass, "Must

be finished." And as all this alcoholic liquid heated his blood and prevented his sleeping, he rose at night, slipped on his trousers, lighted a lamp and woke "Coloche." Then they went down to the cellar, taking from the sideboard a crust of bread that they dipped into their glasses, filled draught on draught at the very cask itself. Then when they had drunk enough to feel the wine rippling about in their stomachs, the father tapped the sounding wood of the cask to listen whether the level of the liquor was lower.

The Marquis asked:

"Are they those who are working around the great rock?"

"Yes, the very ones."

Just at this moment the two men hastened away from the rock that was filled with powder, and all the surrounding crowd took flight like a routed army. They scattered towards Riom and towards Enval, leaving the great rock standing quite alone on a hillock covered with short grass and stones, for it cut the vineyard in two and the ground near it had never been cleared.

The crowd above was now as large as the other and was quivering with pleasure and impatience. The deep voice of Petrus Martel announced: "Attention! the fuse is lighted."

A shiver of expectation passed over Christiane. But the doctor whispered behind her:

"Oh! if they have used the whole length of the fuse that I saw them buy, there will be at least enough to last ten minutes."

All eyes were fixed on the rock. Suddenly, a dog, a little black dog, a sort of mongrel, went up to it. He walked all round it, smelled it and no doubt discovered a suspicious scent, for he began to yelp

with all his might. His legs were stiff, the hair on his back bristled, his tail was stretched out straight, and his ears were pricked up.

A laugh ran through the crowd—a cruel laugh, for they hoped he would not go away in time. Then voices called to coax him back, men whistled and tried throwing stones, but they fell short. Still the cur did not stir and barked furiously at the rock.

Christiane began to tremble. She had a horrible dread of seeing the dog blown to pieces. All her pleasure was over. She repeated nervously, stammeringly, trembling with distress:

"Oh, mon Dieu! Oh, mon Dieu! he will be killed! I cannot bear to see it!—I cannot!—I cannot!—Let us go away——"

Her neighbor, Paul Bretigny, rose and without a word began to go down towards the great rock as quickly as his long legs could carry him.

Cries of horror burst from the crowd, a clamor of terror, and the mongrel, when he saw the tall man coming towards him, ran behind the rock. Paul followed him, the dog went round to the other side, and for a minute or two they both ran around the rock, coming and going, now to the right, then to the left, as if they were playing a game of hide-and-seek.

Seeing at last that he could not catch the creature, the young man began to climb up the slope again, and the dog recommenced his furious barking.

Cries of anger greeted the return of the breathless, rash young man. For people never forgive those who have made them tremble. Christiane choked with emotion and pressed her hands against her beating heart. She lost her head so far as to exclaim: "At least, you were not injured!" Gontran, who was furious, cried: "The man is crazy,

he never before committed such follies. I never saw such an idiot!"

The ground swayed, rose. A great detonation shook the whole place, and for nearly a minute thundered among the mountains and was repeated by the echoes like so many reports of a cannon.

Christiane saw nothing but a shower of stones and a high column of earth sinking back to the ground.

Instantly the crowd, with piercing yells, rushed down from above like a wave. The battalion of scullions bounded and tumbled down the knoll, leaving far behind the regiment of actors, who descended with Petrus Martel at their head.

The tricolor parasols came near being swept away in the rush.

Everyone ran, men, women, peasants and townsmen. One saw them falling, rising, and rushing on again. On the road, the two tides of people driven back a few moments before by fear now rolled towards one another to jostle and mingle together at the site of the explosion.

"Let us wait a little," said the Marquis, "until their curiosity is appeased, before we take our turn at looking."

The engineer, M. Aubry-Pasteur, who had just risen with infinite pains, said:

"As for me, I shall return to the village by the footpaths. There is nothing more to keep me here."

He shook hands with them, bowed and walked away.

Dr. Honorat had vanished. They talked about him, the Marquis saying to his son:

"You have known him for only three days, yet you make fun of him all the time. You will end by offending him."

But Gontran shrugged his shoulders and replied:

"Oh, he is a philosopher, a true skeptic, that fellow! I'll warrant that he won't get angry. When we two are alone together he laughs at everything and everybody, beginning with his patients and their mineral drinks. I'll treat you to a box at the theater if ever you see him vexed at my jokes."

Meanwhile there was great excitement below at the spot where the rock had been blasted away. The great surging crowd jostled, swayed and shouted, overcome with the excitement of an unexpected surprise.

Andermatt, always active and full of curiosity, inquired:

"What is the matter with them? What in the world is the matter with them?"

Gontran said he would go and see, and left them. Christiane, no longer interested, thought how it would have taken only a little less length of fuse to have resulted in the death of her foolhardy neighbor, who would have let himself be blown to pieces because she had been anxious over the life of a dog. She thought that this man must indeed be very wild and reckless to thus needlessly expose himself to danger to gratify a wish of a lady that was a stranger.

Persons on the road were now seen running towards the village. The Marquis wondered in his turn, "What is the matter with them?" And Andermatt, no longer able to resist his curiosity, started down the hill.

Gontran from below motioned to them to come.

Paul Bretigny asked:

"Will you take my arm, Madame?"

She took his arm, which felt as steady as iron, and as her foot slipped on the dry grass, she leaned

upon it as though it were a railing, with absolute confidence.

Gontran, who came to meet them, cried:

"It's a spring. The explosion has made a spring gush up."

So they went into the crowd. Then the two young men, Paul and Gontran, went ahead and pushed the people aside, disregarding their grumbling, and opened a way for Christiane and her father.

They walked over a confused mass of sharp, broken, powder-blackened stones until they came in front of a hole full of muddy water, that bubbled up and flowed among the feet of the people, down towards the river. Andermatt was at the spring already, for he had made his way through the crowd by methods of insinuation which, Gontran said, were peculiar to himself. He was watching with profound interest the water springing up from the ground and flowing away.

Dr. Honorat, standing opposite to him on the other side of the hole, was looking at it too, but with an air of bored surprise. Andermatt said to him:

"You should taste it; perhaps it is mineral."

The doctor replied:

"No doubt it is a mineral spring. They all are here. Soon there will be more springs than patients."

The other repeated:

"But you must taste it."

The doctor did not bother himself about it.

"We must wait at least until it has cleared."

Everyone wanted to see it. Those in the row behind pushed those ahead right into the mud. A child fell down in it and made them laugh.

The Oriols, father and son, were there looking gravely at this unexpected spring, and did not know

what to think of it. The father was a dried-up old man with a tall, thin body and a bony face—the solemn-looking face of beardless peasants. The son, taller still, was a veritable giant. He also was thin, wore a mustache, and looked like a trooper and a wine-grower at once.

The bubbling of the water meanwhile seemed to increase, it grew in volume and commenced to clear.

There was a movement in the crowd, and Dr. Latonne appeared with a glass in his hand. He was perspiring and panting, and was rooted to the spot when he saw his colleague, Dr. Honorat, with one foot resting on the edge of the new spring, like a general entered first into a conquered city.

He asked, hesitatingly:

"Have you tasted it?"

"No, I am waiting until it clears."

Then Dr. Latonne plunged in his glass and drank with the knowing air of experts tasting wines. Then he announced, "Excellent!"—a word that did not commit him, and handing the glass to his rival, asked: "Will you try some?"

But Dr. Honorat evidently did not enjoy mineral waters, for he answered smiling:

"No, thanks! It's quite enough that you have tested its merits. I know their flavor."

He knew their flavors, all of them, and he appraised them, too, but in a different way, for turning to Père Oriol, he said:

"That is not equal to your good vintage."

The old man was flattered.

Christiane was satisfied, and wanted to leave. Her brother and Paul again opened a way for her through the crowd. She followed them, leaning on her father's arm. Suddenly she slipped and nearly fell. Then looking down at her feet she saw that

she had stepped on a piece of bleeding flesh, covered with black hair and sticky with mud. It was part of the mongrel that had been torn to pieces by the explosion and trampled under foot by the crowd.

She was filled with emotion and could not restrain her tears. And she sobbed as she dried her eyes with her handkerchief: "Poor little thing, poor little thing!" She did not want to hear anything more, she wanted to go home and shut herself in. This day, so brightly begun, ended unhappily. Was it an omen? Her shrinking heart beat fast.

They were now alone on the road, and they caught sight in front of them of a tall hat and two tails of a frock coat fluttering like two black wings. It was Dr. Bonnefille coming last of all, and running with a glass in his hand, like Dr. Latonne.

He stopped when he saw the Marquis.

"What is it, Marquis?—They told me—a spring?—a mineral spring?"

"Yes, my dear doctor."

"Abundant?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Are—are—they there?"

Gontran gravely answered:

"Yes, indeed, of course. Dr. Latonne has even made an analysis already."

Then Dr. Bonnefille began to run towards the spring again, while Christiane, a little diverted and cheered by his laughable appearance, said:

"After all, I do not want to go back to the hotel. Let us go and sit in the park."

Andermatt had stayed over there by the spring, watching the water flow.

CHAPTER III

WHEN DOCTORS DISAGREE!

THE *table d'hôte* was noisy that evening at the Grand Hotel. The subject of the great rock and the spring had excited conversation. The diners were not many, however, only about twenty in all. They were mostly rather taciturn people, quiet and ill. They had in vain tried all the known springs, and were now experimenting with the new resorts. At the end of the table occupied by the Ravenels and Andermatts there were first the Monecus, a little man who was very white, with his daughter, a very pale girl, who sometimes rose in the middle of a meal and left her plate half-full. Beyond them was the fat M. Aubry-Pasteur, the former mining engineer. Then came the Chaufours, a family in mourning that one met all day long on the paths of the park, walking behind a little carriage in which their deformed child was wheeled. After them were the Paille ladies, mother and daughter, both widows, tall and large all over, in front and behind. "You can easily see," said Gontran, "that they ate their husbands, and that is what upset their stomachs."

Farther on was a very red-faced man, brick-red, who also digested poorly. Then the rest were inconspicuous persons, those mute travelers that enter the dining-room of the hotels with noiseless steps, the woman in front, the man behind, who bow the moment they enter the door and take their seats with a timid, retiring air. All the other end of the table

was empty, although places were set there for future guests.

Andermatt talked with animation. He had spent the afternoon conversing with Dr. Latonne, and had let fall great schemes for the development of Enval.

The doctor had given him a glowing account of the wonderful merits of the Enval mineral water. It was much superior to that of Châtel-Guyon, although the fame of that had been growing for the past two years.

There was to the right that hole, Royat, which was booming, and on the left that hole Châtel-Guyon, put on a paying basis in such a short time. What couldn't one do with Enval, if one only knew how!

He said, speaking to the engineer:

"Yes, sir, everything is there, if one knows how to develop it. It's all a matter of skill, tact, seizing the opportunity, and pluck. In opening a watering-place you must know how to launch it, nothing more, and to launch it the great medical corps of Paris must be interested in it. As for me, sir, I always succeed in everything I undertake because I always seek out the practical method, the only method that will insure success in each special case I am engaged with, and until I have found it I do nothing, I wait. It's not enough to have the mineral water; you must make people drink it, and to make them drink it, it is not sufficient for one oneself to advertise in the papers and elsewhere that it is unrivaled. One must know how to have this said persuasively by the only men who have influence with the people who will drink it, with the sick people that we need here, with the class of very credulous persons who spend their money in medicaments, that is, by the doctors. Do not address the court except through lawyers; it will only pay attention to them, and will only under-

stand them; do not address the sick except through doctors, they will listen only to them."

The Marquis, who admired the practical, reliable good sense of his son-in-law, exclaimed:

"Ah! that is certainly true. You have a wonderful faculty of reaching the point exactly, my dear fellow."

Andermatt excitedly continued:

"A fortune could be made here. The country is admirably suited, the climate is excellent. I only question one thing: would we have enough water for a large establishment? For things done by halves are always a failure. We should need a really large establishment and, consequently, a great deal of water—enough to supply two hundred baths at the same time with a rapid, continuous flow. But the new spring and the old together would not supply fifty, according to Dr. Latonne——"

M. Aubry-Pasteur interrupted him:

"Oh, as far as the water is concerned, I can supply you with all you wish."

Andermatt was astounded.

"You?"

"Yes, I. That astonishes you, but I will explain. Last year about this very time I was here just as now, for the baths of Enval agree with me. Then one morning I was resting in my room when I saw a stout gentleman arrive. He was the president of the board of administration of the establishment. He was very much troubled for the following reason: the Bonnefille spring was getting so low that they feared it would cease to flow altogether. As they knew that I was a mining engineer, they came to ask me if I could find any way of saving their enterprise.

"I at once set to work studying the geology of

the country. You know that in every part of the region primitive displacements have brought about different local underground conditions.

" The question was thus to discover where the mineral water came from, through what fissures it rose, the direction of these fissures, and their origin and character.

" First, I looked over the establishment with great care, and I saw thrown in a corner a piece of old bath-pipe no longer in use. I noticed that it was then almost wholly closed by accumulations of lime. Thus it was evident that the water deposited its soluble salts on the sides of the conduits and closed them in a short time. Necessarily it would be deposited in a similar way in the natural conduits of the ground mass, which was granite. Clearly the Bonnefille spring was stopped up. Nothing more.

" The question then was how to tap it further on. Everyone had looked for it above the original opening. But I, after my studies, observations, and reasoning, looked for it, and I found it fifty meters further down. This was for the following cause:

" As I said just now, it was first necessary to determine the origin, character, and direction of the fissures in which the water flowed through the granite. I readily proved that these fissures led from the plain towards the mountain, and not from the mountain to the plain, which sloped at an angle like a roof. This no doubt resulted from a subsidence of the plain, which drew downward with it, as it sank, the buttresses of the mountains. Therefore the water, instead of descending, rose through every fissure in the granite beds. So I discovered the cause of this unexpected phenomenon.

" Originally Limagne, that vast stretch of sandy

and clayey lands of which one can hardly see the limits, was on a level with the first plateaus of the mountains; but as a result of the underground geological conditions it sank, drawing downwards with it the edge of the mountain, as I just explained. Then this extensive subsidence formed at the boundary between the sands and clays and the granite a great barrier of clay. This is of great depth and is impervious to water.

" The effect of this is as follows:

" The mineral water comes from the heated lavas of ancient volcanoes. That which flows a long distance cools on the way, and rises, chilled, at the temperature of ordinary springs. That which flows a less distance gushes up while it is still warm, at different temperatures, according to the distance from the source of heat. This is the path the water follows: It descends to unknown depths until it reaches the clay barrier of Limagne. Unable to pass through this and under great hydrostatic pressure, it seeks an outlet. Then it finds the sloping crevices in the granite, enters them, and rises through them to a level just beneath the surface soil. There the water takes again its original downward flow, and follows the stream-beds down to the plain. I may add that we do not see a hundredth part of the mineral water of these valleys. We find only those that reach the surface as springs; the majority when they reach the upper ends of the fissures escape beneath a thick layer of vegetable mould and soil, by which they are absorbed.

" My conclusions from these facts are: First. To find the mineral water one must look along the dip and strike of the overlying layers of granite.

" Second. To keep a spring flowing, the fissures must be kept from being plugged up by calcareous

deposits. This can be accomplished by digging artificial shafts.

" Third. To tap the source of a given spring, a boring must be made down to the same fissure at a place above and not below the first, on condition of course that one operates on this side of the clay barrier that forces the water to rise upward.

" From this point of view, the spring discovered to-day is admirably situated at only a few meters from the barrier. If one wished to found a new resort, that is the spot where it should be placed."

There was a pause when he had finished speaking.

Andermatt, perfectly delighted, said only:

" Isn't that wonderful? When one sees behind the scenes all the mystery vanishes. You are a valuable man, M. Aubry-Pasteur."

He and the Marquis and Paul Bretigny were the only ones that had understood this explanation. Gontran alone had not heard a word of it. The rest stretched their ears and listened with wide-eyed astonishment to the words that fell from the lips of the engineer, perfectly dazed with astonishment. The Paille ladies especially, who were very devout, asked themselves if this explanation of a phenomenon established by God and accomplished according to His mysterious way was not in a manner irreligious. The mother thought it her duty to say: " The ways of Providence are inscrutable." The ladies near the center of the table showed their approval of this by an inclination of their heads, for they were also disturbed at having heard such incomprehensible words.

M. Riquier, the brick-red-faced man, declared:

" For all I care, the waters of Enval can come from the volcanoes or from the moon. Here I've been taking them for ten days and feel no effect at all."

M. and Mme. Chaufour protested against this in the name of their child, who was beginning to move his right leg, which he had never done during the six years that he had been under treatment.

Riquier replied:

"Parbleu! That proves that we have not got the same disease. It does not prove that the Enval waters cure affections of the stomach."

He seemed in a furious temper, exasperated at the failure of this new experiment.

Then M. Monecu also took up the cause in the name of his daughter. He declared that for the past eight days she had commenced to be able to endure food, and was not obliged to leave the table at every meal.

And his tall daughter blushed and looked down at her plate.

The Paille ladies also were better.

Then Riquier grew furious, and turning bruskly towards the two women, said:

"You have stomach trouble, you ladies?"

Both answered together:

"Yes, indeed, sir, we cannot digest anything."

He almost hurled himself from his chair, stammering:

"You—you— It's enough to look at you. You have stomach trouble, you ladies. In other words, you eat too much."

Madame Paille, the mother, furious, replied:

"As far as you are concerned, sir, there's no doubt. You show too well the disposition of persons who have lost their digestion. It's a true saying that good stomachs make good-natured men."

A very thin old lady, whose name no one knew, said with an air of authority:

"I think that everyone would find the waters of

Enval more beneficial if the chef of the hotel would occasionally remember that he is cooking for invalids. Really, he gives us things that are impossible to digest."

At this all the table struck a harmonious chord. Indignation against the hotel manager who served lobster, pork, eels, cabbages, cabbage and sausages, all the most indigestible dishes in the world, to people for whom the three doctors, Bonnefille, Latonne and Honorat, ordered only white meats, lean and tender, fresh vegetables, and milk diet.

Riquier, trembling with rage, said:

"Is it not the duty of the doctors to supervise the table at the hot springs, rather than to leave such an important matter as food to the choice of an ignorant brute? As it is, we are served every day with hard-boiled eggs, anchovies, and ham as side dishes—"

M. Monecu interrupted:

"Oh, pardon me, but my daughter can only digest ham, and it was prescribed for her by Mas-Roussel and Remusot."

Riquier exclaimed:

"Ham! ham! but it is a poison, sir."

Then at once the table was divided into two factions, that which tolerated ham and that which did not tolerate ham.

An interminable discussion began, that was continued every day, on the value of foods.

Even milk was passionately discussed, for Riquier could not drink a glass of it mixed with Bordeaux without suffering immediately from indigestion.

Aubry-Pasteur, who was angry in his turn because the merits of foods of which he was fond were called in question, cried out at this:

" But, *sapristi,* sir, if you suffer from dyspepsia and I from gastralgia, we require foods as different as are glasses needed by near-sighted people different from those needed by far-sighted, yet both of these classes of persons have disorders of the eyes."

He added:

" Now, as far as I am concerned, I am suffocated when I drink a glass of red wine, and I think there is nothing worse for man than wine. All who drink water live for a hundred years, while we—"

Gontran said, laughing:

" *Ma foi!* without wine, and without—marriage—I would find life rather monotonous."

The Paille ladies lowered their eyes. They drank freely the best Bordeaux wine, unmixed with water, and their double widowhood seemed to show that they had applied the same method to their husbands, for the daughter was only twenty-two years old and the mother hardly forty.

But Andermatt, who was usually such a chatterbox, was quiet and thoughtful. Suddenly he asked Gontran:

" Do you know where the Oriols live?"

" Yes, their house was recently pointed out to me."

" Could you take me there after dinner?"

" Yes, indeed, and I should even enjoy going there with you. I wouldn't be at all sorry to see those two little girls again."

So as soon as the dinner was over they started, while Christiane, the Marquis, and Paul Bretigny went up to the sitting-room to spend the evening.

It was still bright daylight, for people dine early at hot springs resorts.

Andermatt, taking his brother-in-law's arm, said:

" My dear Gontran, if this old fellow is reason-

able and if the analysis gives what Dr. Latonne hopes for, I will probably open up a large concern here—a watering-place."

He paused in the middle of the street, and, taking his companion by the lapels of his coat, said: "Ah! you don't understand, you people, how fascinating business is—not that concerned with buying and selling, but large enterprises like ours. Yes, my dear fellow, when one understands them fully, one sees that great enterprises include everything that men have ever been interested in. They are at once politics, war, diplomacy—everything, everything! One must always be searching, finding, inventing, understanding everything, foreseeing everything, daring everything. The battle of to-day is waged with money. As for me, I always look on coins of a hundred sous as little soldiers in red breeches, on twenty-franc pieces as glittering lieutenants, on bills of a hundred francs as captains, and on those of a thousand as generals. And I fight, *sacré bleu!* I fight from morning till night with everybody, with everybody.

"This is to live, to live grandly, like the great men of old. We are the great men of to-day, the truly great, the men of power! Look, see this village, this poor village! I will make a city of it, I myself, a white city, full of large hotels, filled with people, with elevators, servants, carriages, a crowd of rich people waited on by a crowd of poor. I will do all this because one evening it chanced to please me to fight against Royat on the right, Châtel-Guyon on the left, against Mont-Doré, La Bourboule, Châteauneuf, Saint-Nectaire, which are behind us, and against Vichy, opposite. And I will succeed because I know the way, the only way. It struck me all at once, just as a great general sees the weak point of

an enemy. Then in our business one must know how to manage men, to win them as well as to overcome them. *Christi,* how interesting it is to live when one can do such things! I am having enough pleasure now out of my town to last for three years. Then think what a piece of luck it was our meeting that engineer who told us splendid things at dinner—splendid, my dear fellow! His theory is as clear as day. Thanks to him, I can ruin the old company without even having to buy it."

He started on again, and they walked slowly up the road to the left towards Châtel-Guyon.

Gontran sometimes would say: "When I pass near my brother-in-law, I distinctly hear in his head the same sound as is in the halls of Monte Carlo—the sound of gold tossed up, thrown down, drawn in, scraped up, lost, and won!"

And truly, Andermatt gave one the idea of being a strange human machine made only to calculate, circulate, and manipulate money. Besides, he was very vain over his wits, and boasted that he could tell at the first glance the real value of anything whatever. So one might see him, every moment, wherever he happened to be, take an article up, examine it, replace it, and say: "That is worth so much." His wife and his brother-in-law were much entertained by this mania and amused themselves by deceiving him. They would show him queer-looking furnishings and beg him to tell them the values, and when he was perplexed by these improbable windfalls, the two laughed together like lunatics. Sometimes, too, right in the street in Paris, Gontran would stop him in front of a store and make him appraise the entire show-window, or give an estimate of the value of a hobbling hack horse, or maybe of a moving van with all the furniture it carried.

One evening at table at a large dinner-party at his sister's he called William and asked him to tell what the price of the obelisk would be. Then, when the other had given some figure or other, he asked the same question in regard to the Solferino bridge and the Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile. Finally he said solemnly: "You could write a very interesting work on the value of the principal monuments of the world."

Andermatt never got angry, and lent himself to all their jokes, as a man who was superior and sure of himself.

When Gontran asked one day: "And I, how much am I worth?" William refused to answer; then when his brother-in-law insisted, saying, "See here, suppose I was captured by brigands, what would you give to ransom me?" He replied at last: "Well!—well!—I would give a note for you, my dear boy." And his smile was so expressive that the other, a trifle vexed, did not insist further.

Andermatt, besides, was very fond of objects of art. He had very refined taste, great appreciation, and he hunted them up cleverly, with the blood-hound's scent that he used in all his commercial transactions.

They now had reached the front of an ordinary-looking house. Gontran stopped and said: "It's here."

An iron knocker hung on a heavy oak door. They knocked and a slender servant girl came to open it.

The banker asked:

"Monsieur Oriol?"

The woman replied:

"Come in."

They went into a kitchen, a great farmhouse kitchen, where a little fire was still burning under a

pot. Then they passed into another room where the Oriol family was gathered. The father was asleep, his back against one chair, his feet on another. The son, with his two elbows on the table, was reading the *Petit Journal* with the desperate effort at attention of a weak mind that is always drifting away. The two daughters sat in the same window-seat, and were working at the same piece of tapestry that had been commenced at the two ends.

They were the first to rise, astonished at this unexpected visit. Then tall Jacques raised his head, flushed with his mental effort. Then at last Père Oriol woke and drew back, one after the other, his long legs that were stretched out on the second chair. The room was bare, whitewashed, paved, furnished with straw-bottomed chairs, a mahogany chest, four prints of Epinal framed under glass, and large white curtains.

They all stared with surprise, and the servant stood at the door, glued there by curiosity.

Andermatt went forward, introduced himself and his brother-in-law, the Count of Ravenel. He bowed low to the young girls with a deep salute of the greatest elegance. Then he sat quietly down and continued:

" Monsieur Oriol, I am here to talk business with you. I will not spend time beating about the bush in telling it, either. Here is the project. You have just discovered a spring in your vineyard. The analysis of the water will be made in a few days. If it proves worthless, of course I shall withdraw; but if, on the contrary, it gives what I hope, I will offer to make a purchase from you of that part and all the surrounding land.

" Consider it well. No one else could make such an offer, not a soul. The old company is on the verge

of bankruptcy, so it can't undertake to build a new establishment, and besides, the failure of the first would not encourage any new ventures.

"Don't give me any answer to-day; talk it over with your family. As soon as the analysis is known, you can set your price. If it suits me I will accept it, if not I will abandon it. I never haggle over prices."

The peasant, who was a business man in his own way and as shrewd as anyone, answered politely that he would see, that he felt honored, and that he would think it over. Then he offered a glass of wine.

Andermatt accepted, then as it was growing dusk, Oriol said to his daughters, who with downcast eyes had resumed their work:

"Give us some light, my little girls."

They both rose at once, went into an adjoining room and soon returned, one carrying two lighted candles, the other four glasses without standards, glasses such as the poor use. The candles were new, ornamented with pink paper, and were evidently ornaments from the girls' mantel.

Then Colosse rose, for only the men of the house went to the wine-cellar.

Andermatt had a happy thought.

"It would give me pleasure to see your wine-cellar. You are the leading vine-grower of the whole country round, so it must be a very fine one."

This reached Père Oriol's heart, and taking a torch he went on ahead to guide them. They re-crossed the kitchen and went down into a cellar where a faint light half revealed casks standing empty, giant millstones rolled into a corner and pierced with a hole in the center like wheels of some antique, colossal chariot, and a press with wooden screws. It had been taken apart, and the brown

wood polished with use caught a reflection from the light, and suddenly shone in the darkness. Then there were tools with steel polished by contact with the earth until they glittered like weapons. One after another these objects were lighted up as the old man passed by with a candle in one hand and a reflector in the other.

One already smelt the wine and the grapes pressed and dry. They then came to a double-locked door. Père Oriol opened it, and raising the torch suddenly above his head showed dimly a long line of hogsheads in a row, and, resting on their rounded sides, another row of smaller casks. First of all, he pointed out that this cellar, which was all on one level, was excavated right into the mountain. Then he described the contents of the puncheons, the vintages, the harvests, and the merits of the wines. Finally, when he arrived in front of the family cask, he carressed it as one might stroke the neck of a favorite horse, and said with pride in his voice:

"That's the one you shall taste. There isn't a bottled wine that is its equal, not one, either at Bordeaux or anywhere else."

For he had the countryman's taste for wine that remains in the casks.

Colosse, who had followed them carrying a large jug, bent down, and turned on the tap of the spigot while his father threw the light on it as if it were a difficult and delicate piece of work.

The light of the candle struck full on their faces—the father's like an old attorney's and the son's like a soldier peasant's.

Andermatt whispered in Gontran's ear:

"Look, what a fine Teniers!"

The young man replied in a low tone:

"I like the girls better."

Then they went back, and to please the two Oriols they had to drink a great deal of the wine.

The girls had drawn their chairs nearer to the table, and went on with their work as if no one had been there. Gontran looked at them all the time, and wondered whether they were twins, for they looked so much alike. One, however, was fatter and smaller, and the other more distinguished looking. Their hair, which was chestnut rather than black, was held in place over their foreheads by a filet and shone at the slightest movement of their heads. They had the somewhat prominent jaw and forehead of the people of Auvergne, and cheek-bones a little too marked; but charming mouths, lovely eyes, eyebrows of unusual delicacy, and deliciously fresh complexions. One felt when one saw them that they had not been brought up in this house, but at a fashionable boarding school, at the convent where the rich and aristocratic young ladies of Auvergne were sent. It was evident that they had there acquired the refined manners of girls of good society.

But Gontran, who felt a distaste for the glass of red wine set before him, touched Andermatt's foot, as a hint to leave. Finally he rose, and they both shook hands energetically with the peasants. Then they again saluted with ceremony the young girls, who responded this time without rising, by a slight inclination of the head.

The moment they were in the street, Andermatt began to talk again:

"Ah, my dear fellow, what an odd family! How palpable the transition there is from common to society people! They needed the son to cultivate the vineyards, in order to save the salary of a man—stupid economy—but they kept him at work, and he belongs with the common people. As for the girls,

they are almost like society people. Let them only make good marriages, and they will look as well as any of our wives, and a great deal better than most of them. I am as pleased to have seen those people there as a geologist is when he has found a fossil animal of the Tertiary period."

Gontran asked:

"Which one do you like best?"

"Which, what do you mean, which? Which what?"

"Of those young girls?"

"Oh, well—indeed, I am sure I don't know. I did not look at them with a view of comparing them. But why does that interest you? You are not intending to carry one off?"

Gontran began to laugh.

"Oh, no, but I am delighted to meet for once women with such freshness, a freshness that they never have with us. I like to look at them as you like to look at a Teniers. Nothing pleases me so much as pretty girls, no matter where or of what class they may be. They are my objects of art. I do not collect them, but I admire them. I admire them passionately as an artist, my dear fellow, as a disinterested artist. What would you have. I love it. By the way, couldn't you lend me five thousand francs?"

The other paused and muttered "Again," emphatically.

Gontran answered simply: "Always!" Then they continued their walk.

Andermatt resumed:

"What the mischief do you do with the money?"

"I spend it."

"Yes, but you spend it too freely."

"My dear friend, I am as fond of spend-

ing money as you are of making it. Don't you see?"

"Very clearly, but you do not earn it."

"That's true. Well, I don't know. One can't have everything. Now you know how to earn it, but you don't know at all how to spend it. The only use you seem to have for money is putting it out at interest. But I don't know how to earn it, though I know admirably how to spend it. It procures for me a thousand things that you know only by name. We were evidently made to be brothers-in-law, for we are perfect complements of one another."

Andermatt muttered:

"What a crazy fellow! No, you shall not have five thousand francs, but I will lend you fifteen hundred—because,—because I may need your help in several days."

Gontran answered very calmly:

"Then I accept them as partial payment."

The other tapped him on the shoulder without replying.

They came near to the park, that was lighted by paper lanterns hanging in the branches of the trees. The casino orchestra played a slow, classic air that hobbled along, full of lapses and stops. It was executed by the same four musicians. They were worn out with incessant playing, morning and night, in this lonely place to the leaves and the brook, with producing the effect of twenty instruments, and weary, too, with not being paid much at the end of the month. Petrus Martel always completed their salary with baskets of wine or litres of liqueurs that the bathers never drank.

Through the din of the concert one could distinguish the noises of the billiards, the striking of the balls, and voices calling monotonously, "Twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two."

Andermatt and Gontran went up. M. Aubry-Pasteur and Dr. Honorat, all alone, were drinking their coffee near the musicians. Petrus Martel and Lapalme played their mad game, and the cashier woke up to ask:

" What would the gentlemen like? "

CHAPTER IV

A SPECIMEN CASE

THE Oriols, father and son, talked together a long time after the girls had gone to bed. Wrought up and excited by Andermatt's proposition, they sought ways of inflaming his desire without endangering their interests. As they were careful, practical peasants, they wisely weighed all chances. They realized that in a region where mineral springs flow along all the stream-courses, it would not do to repel this unlooked-for amateur, who could not be duplicated, by asking too large a price. Yet it would not do to let this spring, which might some day give a flood of liquid silver, slip too easily from their hands. Royat and Châtel-Guyon could teach them a lesson.

So they sought for ways to kindle to a frenzy the banker's desire. They imagined various fictitious companies that would make other offers, and thought up a series of awkward schemes that they felt were imperfect, but were the best they could invent. They slept badly, and in the morning the father, who was the first to wake, wondered to himself if the spring had not vanished during the night. For after all it was possible that it had gone as it had come, that it had re-entered the earth, and would be impossible to rediscover. He rose with anxiety, roused his son, and confided to him his fear. Thereupon, the huge Colosse dressed to go out with his father.

At any rate, they would put in order the fields and

the spring. They would take away the stones, make it all pretty and neat as one does an animal that one hopes to sell.

So they shouldered their pickaxes and shovels, and set out side by side with a long, swinging gait.

They walked along without looking at anything, preoccupied with their business, and answering with a single word the greetings of the neighbors and friends they met. When they reached the road to Riom, they began to feel agitated and to look from the distance to see whether they could discern the water bubbling up and gleaming in the morning sun. The dusty white road was deserted. It was bordered by the brook which some willows overhung. Under one of these Père Oriol suddenly saw two feet, then, when he had walked three steps further on, he recognized Père Clovis, seated on the roadside, with his crutches lying on the grass beside him.

He was an old paralytic, famous throughout the country through which he had tramped for the past ten years in a slow and painful way, on his oaken legs, as he said, like a poor man made of stone. A former poacher of the woods and streams, often arrested and sentenced, he had finally caught cold from his long watches, when he lay in the wet grass, and from his nocturnal fishing in the rivers, when he waded waist-deep in the water. Now he whined and crawled about like a crab that has lost several claws. He crept along, dragging his right leg behind him on the ground like a rag, and the left raised and doubled in two. But the country boys, when they were running about in the dark after girls or after hares, declared that they caught sight of Clovis, swift-footed as a deer and supple as an adder, in the thickets and in the glades, and that his rheumatism was simply a "trick on the gendarmes." Colosse

especially obstinately insisted that he had seen him not once, but fifty times, setting snares, with his crutches under his arm.

Père Oriol paused in front of the old vagabond, and was struck by an idea that was still dimly outlined in his mind; for thoughts grew slowly in his great square head, characteristic of the people of Auvergne.

He said good-morning and the other answered. Then they spoke of the weather, the flowering vines, and of several other matters; but, as tall Colosse had gone on, his father then hastened after him.

Their spring was still flowing. It was now clear, and all the bottom of the hole was red, a beautiful shade of dark red, caused by an abundant deposit of iron.

The two men exchanged a smile; then they began to clear up the surroundings of the spring, and to take away the stones, which they piled in a heap. Then they found the last débris of the dead dog, and buried it with mock ceremony. Suddenly the older Oriol let fall his shovel. A crafty smile of joy and triumph furrowed the ends of his straight lips and the corners of his sly eyes. He said to his son: "Come along with me and watch." The son obeyed, and they regained the road and retraced their steps. Père Clovis was still warming himself and his crutches in the sun.

Oriol stopped opposite him and asked:

"Would you like to earn a hundred-franc piece?"

The fellow cautiously made no answer.

The peasant repeated:

"Hey, a hundred francs?"

Then the vagabond changed his mind and muttered:

" Of course, but what am I to do for it? "

" Well, father, this is what you must do." And he told him at great length, beating about the bush, and with innumerable repetitions, that if he would consent to bathe for an hour every day from ten to eleven o'clock, in a hole that Oriol and Colosse would dig beside the spring, and be cured at the end of a month, they would give him a hundred francs in cash.

The paralytic listened with a stupid look, then he said:

" *Sacré!* all the drugs couldn't cure me; your spring won't be able to."

At this Colosse grew suddenly angry, and shouted:

" See here, you old fraud, you know that I know all about that disease of yours; no one can tell me anything about it. What were you doing last Monday in the Comberombe woods at eleven o'clock at night? "

The old man cried hastily:

" It's not true."

" Not true, you old rascal, that you jumped over the ditch to Jean Mannezat, and that you went off through the Poulin ravine? "

The other repeated emphatically:

" It's not true! "

" Not true that I shouted to you, ' Oh, hey! Clovis, the gendarmes,' and that you turned down the Moulinet road? "

" No, it's not true."

Tall Jacques, furious, almost threateningly cried:

" Ah! It's not true! All right, old three paws, listen: whenever I see you again in the woods at night or in the water, I'll grab you, seeing I have much longer legs, and I'll tie you to a tree till morn-

ing, when we will all go to arrest you, the whole village with us.—''

Here Père Oriol stopped his son, and then said pleasantly:

'' Listen, Clovis, you can easily try the scheme! We will make a bath for you, Coloche and I, and you will come here to bathe every day for a month. For that I will give you not only a hundred, but two hundred francs. And then, listen! If you are cured when the month is over, there will be five hundred more. Just think of it, five hundred in cash plus two hundred, that makes seven hundred.

'' So it will be two hundred for the baths during the month, plus five hundred for the cure. And then —listen to me!—the pain may return. Suppose it should come back in the autumn, we can't help that, the water will have cured you once all the same.''

This time the old rascal calmly answered:

'' In that case I am willing. If it doesn't succeed we shall always have seen the effect once.''

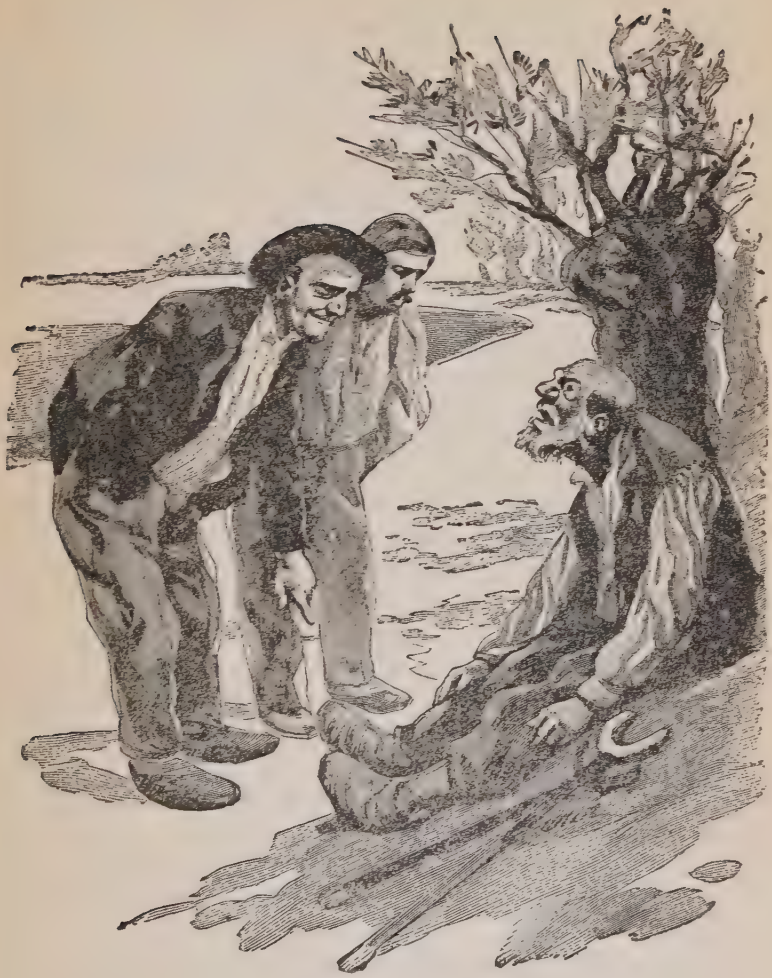
Then the three men shook hands to seal the bargain, after which the Oriols went back to their spring to dig the bath for Père Clovis.

They had been working for a quarter of an hour when they heard voices on the road.

It was Andermatt and Dr. Latonne. The peasants winked at one another and stopped digging in the ground.

The banker came up and shook hands; then all four began to watch the water without saying a word.

It stirred as if it were boiling over a hot fire, throwing up bubbles of gas; then it flowed away towards the brook by a little trench that it had already cut. Oriol, with a smile of pride on his lips, suddenly said:



" Hey! there's some iron there, isn't there? "

For all the bottom was already red, and even the little pebbles that were washed by the overflow seemed covered with a sort of purplish incrustation.

Dr. Latonne replied:

" Yes, but that doesn't count for much. We must know its other properties."

The peasant observed:

" Coloche and I both drank a glass last evening, and our bodies already feel refreshed. Isn't that true, son? "

The big fellow answered in a convincing tone:

" Surely, it refreshed us greatly."

Andermatt was standing stock still with his feet on the edge of the hole. He turned towards the doctor.

" We would need about six times this volume of water to do what I want to; isn't that so? "

" Yes, about that."

" Do you think we could get it? "

" Oh! I know nothing about it."

" Now, the purchase of the land could not be definitely made until after the borings. First we should require a promise of sale, signed before a notary, as soon as the analysis is known, but not to go into effect, unless the consecutive borings give the results hoped for."

Père Oriol grew anxious. He did not understand all this. Andermatt then explained to him that one spring was insufficient, that he could not clinch the purchase, unless more were found; but that he could not look for other springs, until after the promise to sell had been signed.

Thereupon the two peasants seemed sure that their fields were as full of springs as of vine-stalks.

All that was necessary was to dig for them. They would see, they would see.

Andermatt said simply:

"Yes, we shall see."

Then Père Oriol dipped his hand into the water and exclaimed:

"Why, it's hot enough to boil an egg,—much warmer than Bonnefille's."

Latonne in his turn moistened his finger, and realized that this was possible.

The peasant continued:

"Then it has more taste and a better flavor; it hasn't an unpleasant smell like the other. Oh! this one here I warrant is a good one. I have known them all, the mineral waters of the country, for the fifty years that I have watched them flow. I have never seen a finer—never, never!"

He was silent for some seconds, then continued:

"It's not to boast of the water that I say this! Surely no. I would like to make a test of it before you, a real trial, not a chemist's test, but a trial on a sick man. I'll wager that it would cure a paralytic, this spring here, it's so warm and pleasant to taste. I'll make a bet on it."

He seemed to be trying to think up something, then he looked up to the neighboring hill-tops as though to see if he could not find the wished for paralytic. When he did not discover him there, he lowered his eyes to the road.

At a distance of two hundred metres they saw on the roadside the two helpless legs of the vagabond whose body was hidden by the trunk of a willow.

Oriol put his hand to his forehead to shade his eyes, and asked his son:

"That's not Père Clovis still sitting there?"

Colosse answered, laughing:

"Yes, yes. It's he,—he isn't as swift as a hare."

Then Père Oriol took a step nearer Andermatt and said in a serious and convincing tone:

"Now, monsieur, listen. There is a man over there, a paralytic that the doctor knows well, a real case, no one has seen him take a step for ten years. Isn't that so, doctor?"

Latonne returned:

"Oh! that fellow there; if you can cure him, I will pay a franc a glass for your mineral water."

Then turning to Andermatt, he said:

"It's an old man with rheumatic gout, affected with a sort of spasmodic contraction of the left leg and with complete paralysis of the right; in fact, I think, an incurable."

Oriol let him finish; then he continued slowly:

"Very well, doctor, will you make a trial of the water on him for one month? I do not say it will succeed, I promise nothing, I only ask to have the trial made. Now, Coloche and I were going to dig a hole for the stones, but instead we will make a hole for Clovis. He will spend an hour every morning in it and then we shall see, we shall see!"

The doctor muttered:

"You can try. I assure you that you won't succeed."

But Andermatt, attracted by the hope of effecting a cure that would be almost miraculous, gladly accepted the peasant's proposition; and all four turned back to where the vagabond was sitting quite motionless in the sunshine.

The old poacher, seeing through the ruse, pretended to refuse, objecting for a long time; then at last he allowed himself to be persuaded, on condition that Andermatt would give him two francs a day for the hour he should spend in the water.

So the matter was arranged. It was even decided that as soon as the hole was dug, Père Clovis should take his first bath that very day. Andermatt would supply him later with clothes, and the two Oriols would bring an old shepherd's hut that was out in their yard, where the invalid could retire to change his garments.

Then the banker and the doctor went back to the village. On entering it they separated, one going home for consultations, the other to wait for his wife, who was to come to the bathing establishment at about half-past nine o'clock.

She appeared almost immediately. All dressed in pink from head to foot, a pink hat, pink parasol, and a rosy face, she looked like Aurora, and as she went down the steps of the hotel to avoid the curve of the road, she tripped along with the lightness of a bird, hopping from stone to stone without spreading its wings. She called as soon as she saw her husband:

"Oh! this beautiful place. I am so happy."

The scattered bathers, who were walking in serious mood in the lonely little park, turned as she passed; and Petrus Martel, who was smoking his pipe in his shirt-sleeves at the window of the billiard-hall, called to his crony, Lepalme, and said, smacking his lips:

"Gracious, there's a sugar-plum!"

Christiane entered the building, greeted with a smile the bookkeeper, who was sitting at the left of the doorway, and with a good-morning the old jailer sitting at the right. Then handing a ticket to a woman attendant dressed like the one in the refreshment room, she followed her down a corridor upon which the doors of the bathrooms opened. The attendant showed her into one of these, which was

quite large with bare walls. It was furnished with a chair, a mirror, and a shoe-horn, while a great oval basin, coated with yellow cement like the floor, served as a bath.

The attendant turned a cock like those that open the street hydrants, and the water gushed up through a little round, grated opening in the bottom of the basin, which was soon filled nearly to the brim. The overflow escaped by a little gutter sunk into the wall.

Christiane, who had left her maid at the hotel, declined the help of the attendant in undressing, and remained alone, saying she would ring if she needed anything.

She disrobed slowly, watching as she did so the almost imperceptible motion of the water stirring in the clear basin. Then she dipped her foot in, and a delicious feeling of warmth rose to her very throat; then she plunged into the tepid water, and sat down amidst its warmth and softness, in this transparent bath, in the spring that flowed around her, covering her body with little bubbles of gas. She watched with surprise these numberless and very minute globules that clothed her from head to foot in a coat of mail of tiny pearls. And these pearls that were so tiny constantly flew away from her white flesh and escaped at the surface of the water, driven on by others that sprang to life on her form. They sprang up over her skin like light fruits, tiny and charming, the fruits of this dainty body, rosy and fresh, that made pearls grow in the water.

And Christiane felt so happy there in the water, so gently, so softly, so deliciously caressed, clasped by the moving water, the living water, the water quickened from the spring that gushed up from the depths of the basin and fled away through the little hole in the edge of the bath, that she would have

liked to stay there always, without a movement, almost without a thought. A feeling of calm happiness, born of repose and comfort, of peaceful thoughts, of health, of quiet joy and silent gayety, pervaded her with the exquisite warmth of this bath. Her spirit dreamed, vaguely rocked into repose by the gurgling of the escaping overflow, dreamed of what she soon would do, what she would do to-morrow, of walks, of her father, her husband, her brother, and of that big fellow who troubled her a little after the adventure of the dog. She did not like violent people.

No desire agitated her soul, calm as her heart in this tepid water—no desire save a vague wish for a child—no desire for any other life, of emotion or of passion. She felt comfortable, happy, and contented.

She was startled—some one opened the door—it was the attendant bringing her linen. The twenty minutes had passed, and it was already time to dress. This call was a pang, almost a misfortune. She wanted to ask the woman to leave her for a few minutes longer. Then she remembered that every day she would have this delight again, and she left the water with regret, to wrap herself in a bathrobe that felt unpleasantly warm.

As she was passing, Dr. Bonnefille opened the door of his office and, with a ceremonious bow, asked her in. He asked after her health, felt her pulse, looked at her tongue, questioned her as to her appetite, digestion and sleeping. Then he led her to the office door, saying:

"Come, come, that's well. My regards, if you please, to your father, who is one of the most distinguished men that I have met in my career."

At last she escaped, bored by this attention, and in front of the door she saw the Marquis, who was

talking with Andermatt, Gontran, and Paul Bretigny.

Her husband, in whose head every new idea buzzed ceaselessly like a fly in a bottle, was telling the story of the paralytic, and he wanted to go back to see if the vagabond was taking his bath.

They went there to please him.

But on the way, Christiane very quietly drew back, and when they were a little behind the others, said:

"Tell me—for I want to talk to you about your friend,—he isn't very attractive to me, I must say—tell me what he is really like."

Then Gontran, who had known Paul for several years, described his nature, which by moods was passionate, surly, sincere, and kind.

He was, Gontran said, a clever fellow, whose sudden enthusiasm threw him impetuously into every new idea. Yielding to his impulses without knowing how to govern or direct them, or how to overcome feeling by reason, or how to rule his life according to any system based on convictions that he had thought out, he obeyed his impulses, whether they were excellent or vicious, the moment that a desire, a thought, or any feeling whatever, stirred his high-strung nature.

He had already fought seven duels, for he was as quick to insult people as he was afterwards ready to become their friend. He had been madly in love with women of all classes. They were adored with the same transports, from the shop-girl, picked up on the threshold of her store, to the actress that he carried off—yes, carried off—the evening of a first performance. As she was stepping into her carriage to return home, she was borne away in his arms, in the midst of the astounded spectators, and thrown

into another carriage, which disappeared at a gallop before anyone could follow or overtake it.

And Gontran added:

"So you see, he is a good fellow, but a madcap. Then, too, he is very rich, and is capable of doing anything—anything at all—when he loses his head."

Christiane resumed:

"What a strange perfume he uses! What is it?"

Gontran answered:

"I don't know at all; he doesn't want to tell. I think it came from Russia. It was the actress, his actress, of whom I am now curing him, who gave it to him. Yes, indeed, it is a delicious fragrance."

They saw on the road a crowd of bathers and peasants, for it was customary every morning before lunch to take a stroll along this road.

Christiane and Gontran rejoined the Marquis, Andermatt and Paul, and they soon beheld, on the very spot where only the day before the great rock had stood, a human head. It was a queer-looking head, decked in a ragged felt hat and wearing a long white beard. It rose out of the ground like a decapitated head. One might think it had grown there like a plant. The vine-growers circling round were staring at it, amazed, impassive, for the peasants of Auvergne never jest, though three fat gentlemen, guests of the second-class hotels, were laughing and joking.

Oriol and his son stood watching the vagabond, who was steeping in his hole, sitting on a stone with the water up to his chin. One might have thought that it was a criminal of olden times, sentenced to death for some strange crime of witchcraft. He had not even left his crutches behind, and they were bathed in the water beside him.

Andermatt, delighted, kept shouting:

"Bravo! bravo! here's an example that all the people in the country suffering from rheumatic pains ought to follow."

Then, leaning towards the old fellow, he shouted as if the man were deaf:

"Are you all right?"

The man, who seemed completely stupefied by the almost boiling water, replied:

"I feel as if I were melting. *Sacré!* but it's hot!" Then Père Oriol exclaimed:

"The hotter it is, the more good it will do him."

A voice inquired behind the Marquis:

"What in the world is going on?"

And M. Aubry-Pasteur, panting as usual, stopped on his return from his daily walk.

Then Andermatt explained about the projected cure.

But the old fellow kept repeating:

"*Sacré,* how hot it is!"

And he wanted to get out, asking for help to pull him from the water.

The banker finally succeeded in calming him by a promise of twenty sous extra per bath.

The people formed a circle around the hole in which the grayish rags that covered the old body were soaking.

A voice called out:

"What queer meat for soup! I would not dip a piece of bread in it!"

Another rejoined:

"The meat would scarcely suit me either!"

But the Marquis remarked that the bubbles of carbonic acid seemed more abundant, larger, and more active in this new spring than in that of the baths.

The rags of the vagabond were covered with

them, and they rose to the surface in such numbers that the water seemed traversed by countless little chains, by an infinite number of rosaries formed of tiny, round diamonds, for the bright sunshine of the open sky made them as transparent as gems.

Then Aubry-Pasteur burst out laughing.

"*Parbleu!*" said he, "let me tell you how they do at the bathing establishment. You know, they catch a spring like a bird in a snare, or rather in a bell. That's what they call coaxing it. Well, last year this is what happened to the spring that supplies the baths. The carbonic-acid gas, being lighter than water, accumulated in the top of the bell. Then, when it had collected there in a very large amount, it was forced along the conduits, rose in quantity in the baths, filled the bathrooms, and suffocated the patients. There were three accidents from this cause in two months. Then they consulted me again, and I invented a very simple apparatus, which consisted of two pipes that carried the water and the gas separately from the bell and then mingled them again directly under the bath, thus restoring to the water its normal quantity of gas, but avoiding a dangerous surplus. But my apparatus would have cost a thousand francs. So what do you suppose the superintendant did then? You may have a thousand guesses. He bored a hole in the bell to get rid of the gas, which escapes in a hurry, I can tell you. As a result they now sell you acidulated baths without acid, or at least with so little that it doesn't amount to anything. But just look at what there is here."

Everyone was indignant. They ceased to laugh, and looked with envy at the paralytic. Each bather would gladly have shouldered a pickaxe to dig a hole for himself alongside of the vagabond's.

Then Andermatt took the engineer by the arm,

and the two sauntered away talking together. From time to time Aubry-Pasteur paused and seemed to draw diagrams with his cane, indicating various points, and the banker noted it down in his notebook.

Christiane and Paul Bretigny began to talk together. He told her about his tour in Auvergne, what he had seen and his impressions. He loved the country with his ardent nature, for there the soul is constantly filled with sensuous pleasure. He loved this delight of the senses that it awoke in him, making every nerve and sinew tingle.

He said:

"With me, madame, it seems as if I were open to every impression, and everything flows in and pervades me, making me weep or gnash my teeth. When I look at that hill facing us, that great green fold, that nation of trees scaling the mountain, I feel all the forest in my eyes, it penetrates, pervades me, flows in my blood. It seems as if I devoured it and it filled my being,—I become myself a forest."

He laughed as he told this, and cast his large, round eyes now on the forest and again on Christiane, and she, surprised, astonished, but very impressionable, felt as though she also were devoured like the forest by this wide-seeing, rapacious glance.

Paul continued:

"And if you only knew what delights I owe to my sense of smell! I drink in this air, I am intoxicated with it, I live in it, and I can distinguish every fragrance in it. Listen, I will tell you. First, have you noticed, since you have been here, a delicious fragrance, to which no other can be compared, so delicate is it, so light, that it seems almost—how shall I say?—an immaterial essence? One recognizes it at every turn, intangible, impossible to tell whence it comes. Never, never has anything more—more

divine stirred my soul. Well, it is the fragrance of the vine in bloom! Ah! I was four whole days discovering whence it came. And isn't it a charming thought, madame, that the vine that gives us wine, wine which only finer spirits can appreciate and enjoy, gives us also the most delicate and exciting of perfumes, which only those of the highest sensibility can discern? And then do you detect also the heavy fragrance of the chestnut trees, the sweet savor of the acacias, the aromatic herbs of the mountain, and the grass, the grass that smells so sweet, so sweet,—yet no one suspects how sweet."

She was astonished to hear such things; not that they were surprising, but they seemed of such a different character from those that daily surrounded her, that her mind remained impressed, stirred, excited.

He talked on, his voice a trifle dull in tone but warm.

"And then, stay, do you not also perceive in the air, on the roads when the sun is warm, a slight savor of vanilla? Yes, is it not? Well, that's—but I dare not tell you."

He laughed aloud, and suddenly stretching his hand before him, said: "Look!"

A line of wagons loaded with hay were coming, drawn by cows yoked two by two. The slow beasts, their heads bowed beneath the yoke, and their horns bound to a wooden bar, crept painfully along, and one could see the movement of the bones of the legs through the skin. In front of each team a man in shirt-sleeves, wearing a waistcoat and a black hat, walked along with a switch in his hand, regulating the pace of the animals. From time to time he turned, and without ever striking them, he touched the shoulder or forehead of a cow, which then

blinked its great, vague-looking eyes and obeyed his gesture.

Christiane and Paul stepped aside to let them pass.

He asked her:

"Do you perceive it?"

She was astonished.

"What then? That smells of the stable."

"Yes, that smells of the stable, and all these cows that pass along the road—for there are no horses in all this region—scatter along the roads this smell of the stable, which, mingled with the fine dust, gives to the wind a savor of vanilla."

Christiane, a little disgusted, murmured:

"Oh!"

He resumed:

"Permit me, for at the moment I am analyzing like a druggist. At any rate, madame, we are in the most alluring, the softest, and most restful country that I have ever seen—a country of the golden age. And Limagne—Oh! Limagne! But I won't tell you about it, I want to show it to you. You will see it yourself."

The Marquis and Gontran rejoined them. The Marquis took his daughter's arm in his, and, as he turned her to retrace their steps for lunch, he said:

"Listen, children, this concerns all three of you. William, who goes crazy when he has an idea in his head, now dreams of nothing but his city that he is going to build, and he wants to win over the Oriol family. So he wants Christiane to make the acquaintance of the girls to see if they are at all congenial. But their father mustn't suspect our plan. Then I had the happy idea of a charity fête. You, my daughter, shall call on the curé, then with him you will choose two of his parishioners to make col-

lections with you. You know which ones you are to have him choose, but he will invite them on his own responsibility. As for you, boys, you are to arrange a lottery game at the casino. Petrus Martel with his actors and musicians will help you. And if the little Oriol girls are attractive, for they are said to have been very well educated at their convent, Christiane will make a conquest of them."

CHAPTER V

A SLY INSINUATION

FOR eight days, Christiane did nothing but prepare for the fête. The curé, as had been predicted, found among his parishioners only the Oriol girls who were worthy of making collections with the daughter of the Marquis of Ravenel. Happy at this chance to occupy a prominent position, the curé had taken all the required steps, organized and arranged everything, and had himself invited the young girls.

The parish was excited, and the mournful bathers found a new topic of conversation at table in making various estimates of the possible receipts of the two gatherings, sacred and profane.

The day promised well. It was splendid summer weather, warm and clear, brilliant sunshine on the plain and delicious shade under the village trees.

Mass was at nine o'clock—a short musical service. Christiane, who had come before to cast a glance at the decorations, which were made of garlands of flowers from Royat and Clermont-Ferrand, heard steps behind her. It was the curé, Abbé Litre, accompanied by the Oriol girls. He introduced them to Christiane, who at once asked the girls to lunch.

The three ladies sat on three seats of honor, placed for them next to the choir. Opposite were three occupied by the young men who had been chosen to accompany the ladies who were collecting. They were dressed in their Sunday clothes, and were

the sons of the mayor, the deputy mayor and the municipal judge, and had been selected out of compliment to the town authorities.

Everything went off very well.

The service was short. The collection amounted to a hundred and ten francs. To this was added five hundred contributed by Andermatt, fifty by the Marquis, and a hundred by Paul Bretigny, making a total of seven hundred and sixty francs—something that had never before happened in the parish of Enval.

After service they took the Oriol girls to the hotel. They seemed a little timid, but not at all awkward, and though they did not say much, it was more through modesty than fear. They had a *table d'hôte* lunch, and pleased the men—all of the men.

The older was more serious, the younger more vivacious, the older more conventional, the younger more gracious, yet they resembled one another as closely as any two sisters could.

The moment the meal was finished, they went to the casino for the lottery-drawing, which was set for two o'clock.

The park, which was now thronged with patients and peasants mingled, looked like the scene of some outlandish fair.

In their Chinese kiosk, the band was playing a rural symphony, an original composition of Saint-Landri himself. Paul, who was walking with Christiane, stood still.

"Listen," he said, "that's beautiful. He has talent, that fellow. With an orchestra that would be fine."

Then he asked:

"Are you fond of music, madame?"

"Very."

"As for me, music overcomes me. When I hear a composition that I like, it seems to me first that the opening strains raise my skin from my flesh, melt it, dissolve it, cause it to vanish, and leave me like one flayed alive, under the attacks of all the instruments. It is on my nerves that the orchestra plays, my bared and quivering nerves, that start at each note. I hear the music not only with my ears, but with all the power of feeling of my whole body, which quivers from head to foot. Nothing gives me such pleasure, or rather such happiness."

She smiled, saying:

"You feel keenly."

"*Parbleu!* what is the use of living if one doesn't feel keenly? I do not envy at all those people who shield their hearts and are as thick-skinned as a hippopotamus. They alone are happy who suffer through their sensations, which come like shocks, and which they enjoy like delicacies. For we must plan all our emotions, happy or sad, and satiate oursevles, intoxicate ourselves, to a point of the keenest pleasure, or to the deepest distress."

She raised her eyes to look at him, a trifle surprised, just as she had been eight days ago, by what he said.

Indeed, for the past eight days, this new friend—for he had soon become a friend in spite of her first dislike—disturbed the tranquillity of her soul and agitated it as one stirs a pool by casting in stones. And he cast stones, great stones, into that soul still resting in sleep.

Christiane's father, like all fathers, had always treated her as a little girl, to whom one should not say much of importance; her brother had made her laugh, but never think; her husband never dreamed that one should speak of anything to one's wife out-

side of common, practical interests. So up to this time she had lived in a sweet, contented torpor of the soul.

This stranger broke upon the gates of her understanding by the shock of ideas that fell like blows of an axe. He was, besides, one of those men that please women, because of his sensitive nature and the extreme acuteness of his emotions. He knew how to talk to them, to tell them everything and make them understand everything. He was incapable of sustained effort; but very brilliant. He always loved or hated passionately, allied himself to every cause with the ardour of a man fanatically convinced, but he was as changeable as enthusiastic. Thus he had to a marked degree the real temperament of women, their credulity, their charm, their mobility, their high-strung nature, combined with the stronger, more active, more receptive, and penetrating intellect of a man.

Gontran suddenly rejoined them.

"Turn round," he said, "and look at the Honorat household."

They looked back and saw Dr. Honorat with a fat old lady walking by his side. She was arrayed in a blue dress, and her head looked like a nurseryman's garden, for all the species of plants and flowers were gathered together on her hat.

Christiane, astonished, exclaimed:

"Is that his wife? Why, she is fifteen years older than he!"

"Yes, she's sixty-five. She was an old nurse that he fell in love with between two cases. The household seems to be one of those where they are always quarrelling from morning till night."

They went back to the Casino, attracted there by the shouts of the crowd. On a large table in front of

the building the lottery prizes were exhibited. Petrus Martel, assisted by Mlle. Odelin of the Odéon, a little brunette, drew and called the numbers, announcing them with the antics of a mountebank, which greatly amused the crowd. The Marquis, accompanied by the Oriol girls and Andermatt, then reappeared and said:

"Shall we stay here? It is so noisy."

Then it was decided that they should take a walk on the road half-way up the hill that leads from Enval to Roche-Pradière.

To reach it, they climbed up one behind the other along a footpath through the vineyards. Christiane took the lead with an easy, quick step. Since she had come to this part of the country she seemed to live a new life, with a keenness of pleasure and a vitality that she had not before known. Perhaps the baths improved her health by removing the slight organic disorders that impede the full enjoyment of life and sadden one without apparent cause, and thus fitted her to see and feel all things more keenly. Perhaps she simply felt animated and swept along by the presence and the ardent spirit of this almost unknown youth who was teaching her to understand.

She took long, deep breaths, as she thought of all he had said about the sweet odors that are borne along by the wind. "It's true," she thought, "that he has taught me to enjoy the fragrance of the air." And she found again all those sweet perfumes, above all that of the vine, which is so light, so delicate, so elusive.

She reached the road, and then they walked in groups. Andermatt and Louise Oriol, the older sister, took the lead, and talked about the yield of the fields of Auvergne. She knew well, this girl of Auvergne, as the true child of her father, endowed

with an hereditary instinct, all the practical details of agriculture. She told them in her modest voice in a refined tone, with the cultivated pronunciation that she had been taught at the convent.

As he listened, he watched her with side-glances, and thought that this serious young girl, who was al-

ready so well informed, was charming. Now and then he exclaimed, somewhat surprised:

"What! Land is worth thirty thousand francs per hectare in Limagne?"

"Yes, monsieur, when it is planted in fine orchards that yield apples used for dessert. It is our part of the country that supplies nearly all the fruits that are used in Paris."

Then he turned back to look with interest on Limagne. From the road on which they were one could see, stretching further than the eye could reach, the vast plain, veiled in a blue haze.

Christiane and Paul also paused facing this vast, veiled expanse of country, so charming to the eye that they might have stayed forever gazing at it.

The road was now sheltered by great walnut trees, whose dense shadows made a grateful coolness. It now no longer ascended, but wound along half-way up on the hillside, which below was carpeted with vines, and above the mown grass crept up to the very rim of the low crest.

Paul murmured:

"Isn't it lovely? Tell me, isn't it splendid? And why is it that this landscape so affects me? Yes, why? It radiates a charm so deep, so wide, so all-inclusive, that it touches me to the heart. It seems, does it not, in looking over this plain, that the wings of the soul are unfurled? And it takes flight and soars, it fades away and vanishes there, in the greater distance, towards those dreamlands that we shall never see. Yes, this landscape is so alluring because it looks so much more like a dream than a reality."

She listened silently, waiting, hoping, welcoming every word, and she was touched without well knowing why. For she, too, had caught glimpses of other countries, of far-off lands, veiled in blue and rosy haze,—improbable and wonderful—never found, yet ever sought, which make all other countries seem commonplace.

He resumed:

"Yes, it is beautiful, because it is beautiful. Other horizons are more striking, but less full of harmony. Ah! madame, beauty, harmonious beauty.

There is nothing but that in the world. Nothing exists but beauty! But how few comprehend it! The lines of a figure, or of a mountain, the color of a painting or of that plain, the indescribable something of the Jaconde, a word that bites to your soul, —this it is which makes an artist also a creator with God, which distinguishes him among men.

"Hark, I will recite to you two verses of Baudelaire."

And he declaimed:

"From heaven or hell, I care not whence thou art coming,
Oh, Beauty, thou phantom of terror, vast yet alluring,
Thine eye, thy smile, thy feet reveal the door
Of an Infinite I love and ne'er have known before.

"From Satan or God, angel or siren, I care not—
If only through thee—oh velvet-eyed fairy—my lot,
By thy poesy, sweetness and radiance, my queen,
In the world is less bleak and my pathway serene."

At this Christiane gazed at him, marvelling at his poetic enthusiasm, questioning him with her eyes, and not understanding what strange meaning might lie in this poetry.

He divined her thought, and was vexed at not having succeeded in communicating his poetic exaltation to her; for he had recited these verses very well indeed, and he resumed with a shade of scorn:

"I am a fool to try to force you to enjoy a poet of such subtile inspiration. But a day will come, I hope, when you will feel all these things as I do. Women who are endowed with much greater intuition than intelligence do not grasp the hidden and veiled suggestions of art, unless a sympathetic appeal is first made to their minds."

And bowing to her, he added:

"I will strive to make this appeal, madame, to your sympathies."

She did not think him impertinent, but strange. Besides, she had even given up trying to understand any more, for she was suddenly struck by the thought, as she had not been before, that his appearance was very handsome. His figure was so tall and broad, with such a manly look, that one did not notice at first with what studied elegance he was dressed.

Then there was something crude about his face that gave to his entire person a slightly heavy look at first glance. But when one knew his face, one found in him a charm—a charm fierce and strong—which grew at moments very sweet, in harmony with the soft tones of his voice, which always seemed a little suppressed.

Christiane reflected, as she noticed for the first time how well-groomed he was from head to foot: "Surely this is the sort of man whose attractions one must discover one by one."

But Gontran ran up to join them. He shouted:

"Sister, oh, Christiane! Wait for me."

And when he had caught up to them, he said, still laughing:

"Oh! do come and listen to the little Oriol girl. She is as entertaining as she can be; she is wonderfully witty. Papa has finally made her feel at her ease, and she is telling us the funniest things in the world. Just wait and hear them."

So they waited for the Marquis, who was coming with the younger of the girls, Charlotte Oriol.

She was cleverly telling with childlike liveliness stories of the village, and describing the simplicity and shrewd humor of the peasants. And she took off their gestures, their slow gait, their grave words, their "fouchtra," their countless repetitions of "bougrrre," which she pronounced "bigrrre," mimicking all their facial expressions in a way that

made her lively, pretty face altogether charming. Her sparkling eyes danced; her mouth, which was a little large, opened so as to show her fine white teeth; her nose, a little retroussé, gave her a piquante look; and she was so fresh, with a flower's freshness that might make one's lips quiver with desire.

The Marquis, who had passed nearly all his life on his own estate, and Christiane and Gontran—who had been brought up in the family château among the proud, tall Norman peasants that, according to custom were sometimes invited to meals, and whose children, with whom Gontran and Christiane took their first communion, were treated with kindly familiarity—knew exactly how to talk to this little country girl, already three-quarters a woman of the world, with a friendly frankness, a cordiality and sincerity, that awoke in her at once a gay, trusting confidence.

Andermatt and Louise returned, for they had gone as far as the village, and did not care to walk through it.

Then they all sat down by a grassy ditch, at the foot of a tree.

They stayed there a long time, talking with languid ease about everything and nothing. Sometimes a cart passed, always drawn by two cows with their heads bowed and twisting under the yoke. They were always guided by a lean peasant in a large black hat, who directed the animals by touches with the end of his slender switch, which he waved like the *bâton* of an orchestra leader.

The man would take off his hat and bow to the Oriol girls, and they would reply by a kindly, "Good day!" in their fresh young voices.

Finally, as it began to grow late, they returned home.

When they reached the park, Charlotte Oriol exclaimed:

"Oh! the *boree!* the *boree!*"

And they were really dancing the *boree* to the strains of an old air of Auvergne.

The peasants, men and women, were treading the measures, skipping and courtesying, turning and bowing, the women holding their skirts with two fingers of each hand, while the men kept their arms swinging or bent up like jug-handles.

The monotonous and pleasant air danced too, through the cool breeze of evening. It was always the same melody with the very high notes played by the violin, while the rhythm was accentuated by the other instruments to make the pace of the dance more tripping. It was a simple peasant air, sprightly and unstudied, that just suited this awkward, rustic minuet.

The bathers too joined the dance. Petrus Martel was hopping about opposite to the little Odelin girl, who affected the graces of a ballet-dancer, and the comic actor Lepalme mimicked a fantastic step around the cashier of the casino, who seemed agitated by memories of Bullier.

But suddenly Gontran saw Dr. Honorat, who had thrown himself into the dance with all his heart and all his might. He was dancing the classic *boree* as a true-born son of Auvergne.

The orchestra was silent. All stopped dancing, and the doctor come up to speak to the Marquis.

He wiped his brow and panted.

"It's fine," he said, "to be young sometimes."

Gontran put his hand on the doctor's shoulder, and smiling mischievously, said:

"You never told me that you were married."

The doctor stopped mopping his forehead, and replied gravely:

"Yes, I am, and badly."

"What did you say?"

"I say badly married. Never commit such a folly as that, young man."

"Why?"

"Why? Well, listen. I have been married for twenty years, and I am not yet accustomed to it. Every evening when I go home I reflect: 'Oh, that old lady is still at my house! Will she never go?'"

Everyone began to laugh, his expression was so serious and convincing.

But the bells of the hotel were ringing for dinner. The fête was over. They escorted Louise and Charlotte Oriol home to their father's house, and when they had left the girls, they talked about them.

Everyone found them charming, but Andermatt was the only one who preferred the older sister. The Marquis said:

"How readily the feminine character can be moulded! The mere proximity of their father's money, of which they hardly even know the use, has made ladies out of these country girls."

Then Christiane asked Paul Bretigny:

"And you, which do you like best?"

He answered:

"Oh, I—I did not even look at them. It is not they whom I like best."

He spoke very low and she made no reply.

CHAPTER VI

PLAYING WITH FIRE

THE days that followed were delightful for Christiane Andermatt. She was full of life, her heart light and her soul full of joy. The morning bath was her first pleasure, a delicions pleasure that made the skin tingle, an exquisitely refreshing half-hour in the warm, flowing water that made her feel happy till night. Indeed, she was happy in all her thoughts and all her desires. The affection with which she felt herself surrounded and pervaded, the intoxication of youth that throbbed in her veins, and then this new environment, this splendid country made for restful dreams and repose, deep and sweet, that embraced her like a great caress of nature, awoke in her new emotions. Everything that came near her, everything that touched her, was a continuation of the sensation of the morning—the sensation of a warm bath, a great bath of happiness in which she plunged.

Andermatt, who had to leave Enval for a fortnight or two, had returned to Paris. He admonished his wife to watch carefully to see that the paralytic did not omit his treatment.

So every day before lunch, Christiane, with her father, her brother, and Paul went to see what Gontran called, "the poor man's soup." Other bathers went, too, and talked with the vagabond.

He could not walk any better, he said, but he felt as if his legs were full of ants. He described how

these ants came and went, rising as far as his thighs, then returning to the ends of his toes. He felt them even at night, these tormenting creatures, tickling and biting him so that he could not sleep.

The strangers and the peasants were all divided into two parties, the credulous and the incredulous, and were deeply interested in the cure.

After lunch, Christiane often went to see the Oriol girls, to take them for a walk. They were the only women at the resort with whom she could talk and be on intimate terms, with whom she could exchange friendly confidences, and from whom she could ask a little feminine affection. She had fancied at first sight the serious yet kindly good sense of the older sister, and even more, the shrewd, droll humor of the younger. And now she sought the friendship of the two girls, not so much to please her husband as to gratify herself.

They went on excursions, sometimes in an ancient six-seated landau, that had been used as a stage, which they found in a livery at Riom, and sometimes on foot.

They were particularly fond of a wild little valley near Châtel-Guyon that led to the Sans-Souci hermitage.

They walked two by two, chatting as they sauntered slowly along the narrow path, under the fir trees that bordered the brook. At all the fords—for the brook constantly wound back and forth across the footpath—Paul and Gontran stood on stones in the stream, and taking the ladies by the arm, helped them to spring across. Each time this happened they walked with different members of the party.

So Christiane was first with one, then with another, but managed every time to stay alone with Paul Bretigny, either in advance of or behind the

rest of the party. His manner towards her had changed since the first days of their acquaintance. He laughed less, was less blunt, and not such a good comrade, but more respectful and attentive.

Yet their conversation grew more intimate, and questions of the affections had the foremost place. He talked of sentiment and love as a man well versed in those subjects, who had sounded to the depths the tender affection of women, and who owed them as much joy as pain.

She was delighted and a little touched, and led him on to make these confidences through a burning and subtile curiosity. All she had learned of him had aroused in her a keen desire to know more, to penetrate mentally into the life of one of these intense men of whom she had caught glimpses only in books, one of those beings filled with the tempests and mysteries of love.

Encouraged thus by her, he told her every day a little more of his life, of his adventures and his sorrows, with a warmth of expression that his burning memories often made passionate, and his desire to please fascinating.

He disclosed before her eyes an unknown world. He found the most eloquent words to describe the subtilities of desire and longing, the ravages of growing hopes, the sacredness of flowers and bits of ribbon, of all these little cherished objects, the unnerving effect of sudden doubts, the agony of alarming conjectures, the tortures of jealosy, and the indescribable frenzy of the first kiss.

And he knew how to tell all this in a very fitting way, veiled, poetic, and alluring. Like all men who are forever haunted with love of women, he talked with reserve of those he had loved with a fever still throbbing in his heart. He recalled a thousand

romantic details that would touch the heart, a thousand affecting incidents that would fill the eyes with tears, and all those sweet trifles of courtship that make the relationship of love among people of pure souls and cultivated minds the most charming and beautiful thing in the world.

All these thrilling and familiar chats, which were renewed and prolonged every day, fell like seeds cast on the ground on Christiane's heart. And the charm of the wide expanse of country, of the fragrant air, of distant Limagne—blue and so vast that it seemed to make the soul expand—those extinct craters on the mountain, earth's ancient furnaces that served now only to heat the healing waters, the coolness of the shade, the light murmur of the brooks over the stones—all this, too, entered the body and soul of this young woman. It pervaded and softened them like a gentle, warm rain falling on a virgin soil, that will cause the flowers to grow from seeds sown in the earth.

She realized perfectly that this young fellow was paying attentions to her a little, that he thought her pretty, even more than pretty, and the wish to please him led her to try a thousand schemes which were simple and artful at once, to fascinate and make a conquest of him.

When he looked sad, she left him suddenly, when she anticipated a tender speech she threw him a glance before the phrase was finished—one of those swift glances of deep meaning that pass like flame to a man's heart.

With pretty speeches, gentle inclinations of her head, dreamy gestures with her hands, and sad looks suddenly brightening into smiles, she showed him without words that his efforts were not lost.

What did she wish? Nothing. What did she ex-

pect would result from this? Nothing. She played at this game just because she was a woman, because she did not realize at all the danger, because without any foresight she wanted to know what he would do.

And then that inborn coquetry had suddenly developed in her which is concealed in the veins of all feminine creatures. The sleeping, artless child of yesterday had suddenly awakened, subtile and keen, in the presence of this man who talked to her unceasingly of love. She divined the increasing agitation of his thoughts when he was near her, she watched the growing emotion in his glance, and she understood all the different tones of his voice with that peculiar intuition of women who feel that they are loved.

Other men in society had already courted her, but she gave them only the gay mockery of a lively young girl. Their commonplace compliments amused her, their woeful looks and sighs filled her with merriment, and she answered all their show of tenderness with mocking jests.

With this man she felt that she was suddenly face to face with a fascinating and dangerous adversary. She had become then one of those artful creatures, clairvoyants by instinct, armed with boldness and coolness, who as long as their hearts are free, lie in wait for, surprise and entangle men in the invisible net of sentiment.

As far as he was concerned, in the first days of their acquaintance, he had thought her very silly. Accustomed as he was to women who were adventuresses, as well drilled in love as an old soldier is in military manœuvres, skilled in all the wiles of courting and tenderness, he thought this simple heart uninteresting and treated it with a light disdain.

But gradually her very simplicity amused and

fascinated him. Yielding to his impressionable nature, he began to surround this young woman with tender attentions.

He knew well that the surest way to stir an innocent soul is to speak constantly of love, appearing meanwhile to be thinking only of others. Then, surrendering himself purposely to the delicate curiosity that he had roused in her, he began, under the pretense of confidences in the shade of the woods, to teach her the meaning of love.

He amused himself as she did at this game, showing her by all the little attentions that men know how to use his growing fondness for her. He posed as a lover without even supposing that he would ever really become one.

They both did all this as naturally on their long, slow walks, as it is natural to bathe on a hot day when one is walking beside a river.

But from the moment that real coquetry developed in Christiane, from the hour that she showed all the inborn wiles of women in fascinating men, when she made up her mind to bring this passionate lover to his knees—as she might have determined to win a game of croquet—he yielded, this candid libertine, to the schemes of this simpleton, and he began to love her.

Then he became awkward, restless, nervous, and she played with him like a cat with a mouse.

With another woman he would have had no hesitation—he would have spoken, and he would have conquered by his alluring passion. But with her he dared not, she seemed so different from all the women he had known.

The others, in fact, were women already scorched by the passions of life, to whom one could say anything, with whom one could venture the boldest

appeals, murmuring near their lips the trembling words that turn the blood to flame. He knew his power, and knew that he would triumph when he could communicate freely his passion to the heart and the senses of the woman he loved.

With Christiane, he felt as if he were in the presence of a young girl, so much did he consider her as a novice, and all his resources were paralyzed. And then he loved her dearly, but in a different way as one might a child or a betrothed. He longed for her, yet he feared to touch her, to soil or tarnish her purity. He had no wish to clasp her tightly in his arms like the others, but to kneel before her, to touch her dress with his lips, and to gently kiss, with a chaste and tender slowness the little curls on her temples, the corners of her mouth, and her eyes, her closed eyes in which he could feel the blue of her charming glance wakening under the drooping lid. He would have liked to protect her from everyone and everything, to save her from being elbowed by common people, from seeing repulsive people, and from going among those who were not clean. He would have liked to have taken the mud from the streets that she crossed, the pebbles from the roads, and to have cut the brambles and the branches so as to make everything smooth and dainty around her, and to carry her always so that she should never have to walk. And it irritated him that she had to talk with the other guests at the hotel, and to eat the same food at the dining-table, and to endure all the inevitable little annoyances of life.

He did not know what to say to her, for all his thoughts were of her. His powerlessness to express the feelings of his heart, his inability to express to her his devotion and the passion that burned in his veins, gave him the air of a wild beast in chains, and

at the same time he felt a strange desire to burst into sobs.

She saw all this without fully understanding it, and was amused by it with the mischievous delight of coquettes.

When they had lingered behind the rest and she felt that at last he would say something disturbing, she would suddenly break into a run and catch up to her father. When she had overtaken him, she would exclaim:

"Suppose we play a game of puss-in-the-corner."

And as a rule, games of puss-in-the-corner ended the excursions. The party looked for a glade or a place in the wood where the path widened, and played like urchins out for a walk.

The Oriol girls and Gontran himself took great pleasure in this amusement which satisfied the incessant desire of motion that all young people have. Paul Bretigny was the only one that grumbled, for he was filled with other thoughts. But gradually he would join in the game, showing at last more eagerness than the others, so as to catch Christiane, to touch her, to lay his hand suddenly on her dress or her shoulder.

The Marquis, whose careless, listless nature was contented with anything that did not disturb his peace of mind, would sit at the foot of a tree and watch his boarding-school at play, as he said. He found this quiet life very congenial, and thought the whole world perfect.

Yet Christiane soon was frightened by Paul's conduct. One day she was even afraid of him.

They had gone one morning with Gontran to the end of a strange ravine, called the End of the World, where the Enval brook rises.

The gorge, which grows constantly narrower and more winding, abuts in the mountain. They scrambled over huge blocks of stone, they forded the stream on stones in its bed, and after creeping around a rock more than fifty meters high that forms a barrier across the upper ravine, they found themselves shut in, in a sort of narrow trench between two gigantic walls of rock, bare to the summit, which was covered with trees and verdure.

The brook there forms a lake shaped like a bowl, and the place is a wild-looking rift in the mountains, strange and unexpected, such as one meets with more often in stories than in nature.

Then, that morning, Paul looked at the great rock in front of them which seemed an impassible barrier, and declared that it bore marks of having been scaled. He said:

"Look, we can go no further."

When with some difficulty he had climbed up the perpendicular wall of rock, he exclaimed:

"Oh! it's charming. A little thicket in the water —do come!"

Then, lying down on the rock, he drew Christiane up by both hands, while Gontran guided her and placed her feet on all the slight projections of the rock.

Soil from the summit had washed down and formed on this slope a wild little garden of shrubs whose rootlets were bathed in the flowing stream.

Their progress through the granite passage of the gorge was barred a little further on; they climbed again over the barrier, then their way was blocked a third time. They found themselves at the foot of an impassable wall over which fell straight and clear, a waterfall, twenty meters high. It plunged

into a deep basin that the falls had excavated which was half hidden under bind-weeds and branches.

The rift in the mountain had now become so narrow, that the two men, holding each other by the hand, could touch the two sides. One could only see a line of blue sky, one heard only the sound of the falling water. One might easily have fancied it one of those undiscoverable retreats in which the Latin poets kept concealed the nymphs of antiquity. It seemed to Christiane as if she had just been violating the grotto of a fairy.

Paul Bretigny said nothing. Gontran exclaimed:

"Oh! how pretty it would be if a woman, fair and rosy, were bathing in that stream!"

Then they turned back. The two first descents were easy, but the third frightened Christiane. The wall was so high and steep, with no places that one could see to rest one's foot.

Bretigny let himself slide down this rock, then stretching his arms towards her, said:

"Jump!"

She did not dare. Not that she was afraid of falling, but she was afraid of him, afraid above all of his eyes.

He gazed at her with the hungry look of a starved beast, with passion that had grown fierce, and his hands stretched towards her, drew her so imperiously that she was suddenly filled with terror and seized with a mad desire to scream, to flee away, to rush up the perpendicular walls of the mountain, so as to escape this irresistible appeal.

Her brother, standing behind her, cried: "Now! jump!"—and pushed her. Feeling herself going, she closed her eyes, and as she was caught in a strong yet gentle clasp, she felt, without seeing, the

strong body of the young man whose warm, panting breath passed over her face.

Then she found herself again on her feet, smiling, and for the time her fear was over while she watched Gontran slide down in his turn.

As this experience made her prudent, she was careful for several days never to be left alone with Bretigny, who seemed to prowl around her as the wolf in the fables circles round the lamb.

But then a long picnic was planned. They were going to take provisions in the six-seated landau and go with the Oriol sisters to take dinner on the shore of a little lake. It was at Tazenat, and was called by the peasants the " Gour " of Tazenat. The plan was to return by moonlight.

So they started off on the afternoon of a very hot day, in the scorching sun that heated the granite walls of the mountain as hot as the stones of an oven.

The carriage slowly crawled up the hill, drawn by three panting horses, covered with foam. The driver drowsed on his seat, with his head nodding. Legions of green lizards ran over the rocks on the roadside. The scorching air seemed full of invisible and oppressive fiery dust. At times this seemed stationary, resistant, dense, then again it stirred a little and passed across their faces as fiery breaths of flame in which there floated an aroma of warm rosin from the far-reaching pine woods.

No one spoke in the carriage. The three women in the back closed their dazzled eyes under the shade of their pink parasols. The Marquis and Gontran slept with handkerchiefs over their faces. Paul gazed at Christiane, who also glanced at him from under her drooping lids.

And the landau, raising a column of white dust, always kept creeping up the interminable ascent.

When at last they reached the plateau, the driver sat up straight, the horses broke into a trot. They passed through a fine, rolling country, well-wooded and cultivated, with villages and isolated houses. To the left, in the distance, they saw the great truncated summits of the volcanoes. Their destination, Tazenat Lake, lay in the bottom of the most distant crater in the mountain chain of Auvergne.

After they had been driving three hours along the road, Paul said suddenly:

"Look at the lava flows!"

Brown, strangely twisted rocks with deep cracks lay along the way. Then on the right, they saw a low-browed mountain whose summit looked flat-rimmed and hollow. They took a path that seemed to lead directly to this, through a triangular defile, and Christiane, who was standing up, suddenly caught a glimpse of a wide, deep crater enclosing a lovely lake as round and sparkling as a silver coin. The steep slopes of the mountain, wooded to the right, and bare to the left, dipped down into the water which they surrounded with a very high and regular inclosure. And the still water, as smooth and shining as metal, reflected the foliage of one slope and the bare rocks of the other so perfectly that one could not discern the margins of the lake. In this great funnel one could see only the center, where the blue sky was mirrored, as a clear, bottomless hole which seemed to pass through the earth, pierced from side to side, right through to the opposite sky.

And now the carriage could advance no further. So they all left it, and took a path on the wooded slope that, passing under the trees, circled around the lake half-way up the slope. This woodland path was used only by lumbermen, and was as green as a meadow. As they walked along it, they could see

through the branches the opposite slope and the water gleaming at the bottom of this basin in the mountain.

Then through a clearing, they reached the shore of the lake, and sat down to rest on a grassy slope shaded by oak trees. And they all stretched themselves out on the grass with a delicious feeling of pleasure.

The men rolled in it and plunged their hands in it, and the women gently lay on it, resting their cheeks against the soft grass as if seeking there a cool caress.

After the heat of the roadside it was one of those delightful sensations, so deep and satisfying that they are almost worthy of being called happiness.

Then the Marquis fell asleep again, and Gontran did the same. Paul talked with Christiane and the young girls. About what? Not much of anything. From time to time, one of them said a few words, another answered after a moment's silence, and their lingering words were as drowsy as their thoughts.

But when the driver brought up the basket of provisions, the Oriol girls, accustomed to keeping house at home and who kept the active habits of household work, began at once to unpack and to arrange the dinner a little further off on the grass.

Paul stayed lying near Christiane, who was in a day-dream. Then he murmured, so low that she could hardly hear, so softly that the words touched her ear as lightly as the faint, mingled sounds borne by the wind: "These are the best moments of my life."

Why was it that these words of vague meaning stirred her to the depths of her heart? Why did she suddenly feel touched as she never had before?

She was looking through the trees at a small hut

a little way off—a hunter's or fisherman's lodge, so small that it could not contain more than one room.

Paul followed her eyes, and he said:

"Have you ever thought, madame, what days might be that were passed together in a hut like that by two beings that loved one another madly? They would be alone in the world, quite alone, face to face! And if such joy as that were possible, should one not leave everything and realize it? Happiness is so rare, so elusive and short-lived. Does one really live in every-day life? What is more dreary than to rise with no hope glowing in your heart, to mechanically do the same wearisome tasks, to eat and drink with moderation, and then to sleep tranquilly like an animal?"

She kept always gazing at the little hut, and her heart swelled as if she must weep, for in a flash she divined the existence of an intoxicating joy of which she had never before dreamed.

She thought, indeed, it would be sweet, to live together in this little home, hidden beneath the trees, looking down on this toy of a lake, this jewel of a lake, true mirror of love! How happy one would be thus, with no one near, without a neighbor, far from the noise of any creature, far from the sound of life, alone with a lover who would pass his hours kneeling at the feet of his adored, and gazing at her while she gazed at the blue wave, and he, kissing her fingertips, whispered tender words of love.

They would live there in the silence under the trees, at the bottom of this crater which would circle their love, as it did the clear depths of the water within its strong and perfect inclosure. There they would live with no horizon for their eyes to rest on or other than the rounded hill-slopes, with no horizon for their thoughts other than the joy of loving,

with no horizon for their longings other than long and endless kisses.

Were there then people in the world who passed such days? Yes, without doubt! And why not? Why was it that she had not perceived ere this that such joys exist?

The girls came to say that dinner was ready. It was already six o'clock. They woke up the Marquis and Gontran, and they walked a little further on to where dinner was spread, and sat Turkish fashion beside their plates that slipped about on the grass. The men idly let the two sisters continue to wait on the party. They ate slowly, throwing what was rejected and the chicken bones into the water. Some one had put in some champagne, and the sudden popping of the first cork was a surprise to everyone, for it seemed so unexpected in this sylvan place.

The day was drawing to a close, the air was filled with coolness and a strange, weird sadness fell with evening on the waters sleeping in the heart of the crater.

When the sun was just sinking, the sky burst into flame, and the lake all at once appeared as a basin of fire. After the sunset, when the horizon grew crimson as a brazier before its fire is extinguished, the lake looked as if it were a basin of blood. Suddenly the nearly full moon appeared over the crest of the hill, pale in the still flaming sky. Then, by degrees as the shadows spread over the earth, she rose round and shining, above the crater which was as round as the moon herself. It seemed as if she would fall in. Then, when the moon was high in the heavens, the lake looked like a basin of silver. And over its surface, that had been motionless all day, one could see tremblings pass, sometimes slow and sometimes fast.

It was as if spirits were fluttering over the still water and trailing in it their invisible veils.

It was the large fish that live in the bottom, the century-old carp and the rapacious pike, that had come up to the surface to sport in the moonlight.

The Oriol girls had put away all the dishes and bottles in the basket that the driver came to carry. Then the party started back home.

As she was passing through the woodland path beneath the trees where rays of light fell through the leaves like a shower on the grass, Christiane, who was coming next to the last, heard a panting voice that whispered close to her ear: "I love you! I love you! I love you!"

Her heart began to beat so wildly that she almost fell, and thought she could not take another step. Still she walked on like one bereft of reason, on the verge of turning back, her arms outstretched, and her lips tightly strained. He had now caught the edge of the little shawl over her shoulders, and he was kissing it madly. Half-fainting, she kept on walking, and could no longer feel the ground beneath her feet.

Suddenly she passed out from under the sheltering canopy of trees, and finding herself in the full moonlight, she mastered her agitation. But before entering the landau and losing sight of the lake, she half-turned back, and with both hands threw a long kiss to the water, that the man who was following her well understood.

All the way home she felt numb in body and soul, stunned, unnerved, as after a fall. The moment she reached the hotel, she rushed upstairs to shut herself up in her own room. When she had bolted the door, she even turned the key as well, so strong was her feeling that she was pursued. Then she stood tremb-

ling in the middle of the room that was almost dark and nearly empty. The lighted candles that stood on the table threw trembling shadows on the walls of the furnishings and the curtains. Christiane sank into an arm-chair. All her thoughts were rushing and leaping through her mind and fled before she could grasp them, hold them, and link them into a chain. She felt now on the verge of tears, not knowing why, heart-broken, wretched, desolate in this bare room, adrift from her way in life as if lost in a forest.

Where was she drifting, what was she doing?

Scarcely able to breathe, she rose, opened the window and the shutter, and rested her elbows on the window-sill. The air was cool. In the depths of the vast, empty heavens, the distant moon, alone and mournful, rose through the bluish heights of night and shed a cold, hard glitter on the trees and the mountain. The whole village was sleeping. The light strain of Saint-Landri's violin, for he practised later and later every evening, floated by and at moments sobbed in the deep silence of the valley. Christiane hardly heard it. The shrill and plaintive cry of the sinewy strings ceased and then began once more.

And the moon wandering in the lonely heavens, and this faint sound lost in the silent night, filled her heart with such desolation that she burst into sobs. She trembled and shivered to the marrow of her bones, shaken by the agony and shudderings of one stricken with a mortal illness. For suddenly she perceived that she, herself, was also alone in life.

She had never been conscious of this until this night. Now she realized it with such keen distress of mind that she thought she would go mad.

She had a father! a brother! a husband! And she

still loved them and they loved her! Now all at once she was remote from them, she had become a stranger to them as if she hardly knew them. The placid affection of her father, the friendly comradeship of her brother, the cold tenderness of her husband, seemed to her as nothing any more, nothing any more! Her husband! So that was her husband, that rosy-cheeked chatterbox, who said to her carelessly: "Are you well this morning, dear?" She belonged to him—to this man—body and soul, by virtue of a contract. Was it possible? Oh! How desolate and lost she felt. She had closed her eyes to look within, to the depths of her thoughts.

And as she called them one after another before her mind, she saw the faces of those who lived close to her. There was her father, untroubled and calm, contented if only no one disturbed his repose; her brother, mocking and skeptical; her husband, running about, his head full of figures, and who would say to her: "I have made a good deal, just now," when he should have said: "I love you."

Another had whispered these words, which still were trembling in her ears and in her heart. She could see him, too, this other man, fascinating her with his fixed gaze, and, if he had been near her at this moment, she would have thrown herself into his arms!

CHAPTER VII

ROMEO CLIMBS THE BALCONY

CHRISTIANE, who had not lain down till very late, woke as soon as the sun threw a flood of rosy light through her wide open window.

She looked at the time,—five o'clock—and lay back luxuriously in the warm bed. She felt so full of life and so joyous that it seemed to her as if a joy, a great joy, a wonderful joy, had come to her during the night. What joy? She wondered, and tried to think what happy news had so filled her with delight. All her sadness of the night had gone, dissolved away as she slept.

So Paul Bretigny loved her! How different he seemed to her from the first day they met! In spite of all her efforts to remember, she could not picture him as he had first appeared to her, nor remember her impressions of him. She could not even recall at all the man that her brother had introduced. The man she knew to-day had retained nothing of the other,—neither the face nor manners—nothing. For the first impression he had made had gradually faded, day by day, undergoing all the slight changes that take place in the mind, when a person one has seen becomes an acquaintance, then a familiar friend, and at last a lover. One gains possession of him hour by hour, without being aware of it. He

enters in one's eyes and heart through his voice, his gestures, all that he says and all that he thinks. One absorbs him, one understands him; one anticipates the meaning of all his words and smiles. At last, it seems as if he belonged to one wholly, so deeply does one unconsciously love all that he is and does.

Then it is impossible to recall how he appeared before one's indifferent eyes when first one saw him.

So Paul Bretigny loved her! Christiane felt at that thought neither fear nor anguish, but a profound tenderness, a great joy, a new and exquisite joy of being loved and knowing that she was loved.

Yet she was a little anxious as to what attitude he would take towards her, and how she should appear before him. But as it was a delicate matter even to think of, she dismissed it from her mind, and trusted to her shrewdness and skill to control future events. She went down stairs at the usual time, and found Paul, who was smoking a cigarette, in front of the hotel door. He greeted her respectfully.

"Good morning, madame. Do you feel well this morning?"

She answered, smilingly:

" Very well, monsieur; I slept splendidly."

And she gave him her hand, although she feared he would hold it too long. But he scarcely even pressed it, and they began to chat calmly as if they had both forgotten.

And the whole day passed without his doing anything to bring to mind his ardent avowal of the evening before. The following days he continued equally reserved and calm, and she regained confidence in him. He had realized, she thought, that he would offend her if he grew bolder. She hoped, she firmly believed, that they had stopped at that charming stage of tenderness when one can love, looking into

the depths of one another's eyes, without remorse, being pure.

But she was careful not to wander off alone with him.

Then one evening, the Saturday of the same week that they had been to the lake of Tazenat, they were going upstairs in the hotel, at about ten o'clock. The Marquis, Christiane, and Paul were together, for they had left Gontran playing éctarté with MM. Aubry-Pasteur, Riquier, and Dr. Honorat in the large hall of the Casino. Bretigny exclaimed, as he saw the moon gleaming through the branches:

"How lovely it would be to go and see the ruins of Tournoël on such a night as this!"

At the mere thought, Christiane was affected, for the moon and ruins had on her the same influence that they have on the minds of nearly all women.

She caught the Marquis' hand and cried:

"Oh! dear father, wouldn't you like to go?"

He hesitated, for he wanted to go to sleep.

She kept urging him:

"Only think, it is so beautiful by day at Tournoël! You said yourself that you had never seen such a picturesque ruin, with the great tower above the château. What must it be at night!"

So at last he consented:

"Well, let us go; but we will only look at it for five minutes and then return at once. For my part, I want to be in bed by eleven."

"Yes, we will come home at once. It only takes twenty minutes to go there."

They started off, all three, Christiane leaning on her father's arm and Paul walking beside her.

He talked of his travels, in Switzerland, Italy, and Sicily. He described his impressions of things he had seen. He told of his enthusiasm on the sum-

mit of Mount Rose when the sun, rising to the level of these icy peaks of the frost world of eternal snow, threw on each of these mighty heights a white and dazzling radiance and illumined them like the pale beacons that lighten the kingdoms of the dead. Then he described his emotion as he stood on the rim of the gigantic crater of Mount Etna, when he felt like an imperceptible atom, at a height of three thousand meters up in the clouds, with no longer anything but the sea and the sky around him,—the blue sea below, the blue sky above—while he stood over the frightful mouth of the volcano whose exhalations stifled him.

He exaggerated these scenes so as to stir the young woman's enthusiasm, and she listened with beating heart, seeing with the eye of fancy all these wonderful things that he had seen.

All at once at a turn in the road they saw Tournoël. The ancient castle stood on a mountain summit, and was crowned by its tall, slender tower that was pierced so that shafts of moonlight streamed through its walls. The castle, despoiled by time and wars of ancient days, traced on a sky of phantoms its great shadow of a fantastic mansion.

All three paused, filled with surprise. At length the Marquis said:

"Indeed, it is very lovely. One would think it a dream of Gustave Doré realized. Let us sit down here for five minutes."

And he seated himself on the grassy roadside.

But Christiane, wild with enthusiasm, cried:

"Oh! father, let us go further. It's so beautiful! so very beautiful! Let us walk to the foot, I beg you will."

The Marquis refused this time.

"No, my darling, I've walked enough. I really cannot go any further. If you wish to see it nearer

to, go there with M. Bretigny. I will wait for you here."

Paul asked:

"Will you come, madame?"

She hesitated between two fears—that of being alone with him, and that of wounding the feelings of a good man by seeming to doubt him.

The Marquis repeated:

"Go on, go on! I will wait for you."

Then she remembered that her father would be within sound of their voices, and she said firmly:

"Let us go, monsieur."

And they started off, walking side by side.

But she had not gone on for more than a few moments when she felt overcome by a keen emotion, by a fear that was vague and mysterious, fear of the ruin, fear of the night, fear of this man. All at once her limbs grew weak, as that evening at the lake at Tazenat, and refused to carry her further. They bent beneath her weight and felt as if they sank into the ground, in which her feet were held when she tried to raise them.

A great chestnut tree growing along the roadside, sheltered the edge of a meadow. Christiane, as breathless as though she had been running, sank down against the trunk, and stammered:

"I will stop here.—We can see quite well."

Paul sat beside here. She heard the throbbing of his heart. He said after a short silence:

"Do you believe that we have lived in the world before, in a former existence?"

She murmured, without having well understood his question, so great was her agitation:

"I don't know. I have never thought about it."

He resumed:

"For my part, I believe it in moments,—or rather

I feel it. As a person is composed of mind and body, apparently distinct, but doubtless parts of the same substance, he should reappear when the elements of which he was formed combine a second time. To be sure, it is not the same individual; but it is the same personality that returns when a body similar to one preceding is occupied by a soul resembling that which animated it formerly. Well, this evening, madame, I am sure that once I lived in this château, that I owned it, that I built it for myself, and that I defended it against enemies. I recognize it; it was mine, I am certain! And I am certain of this, too, that there I loved a woman who looked like you—who was called, like you, Christiane! I am so sure of this that I seem to see you still, calling to me from the heights of the tower. Try to remember! There is a wood at the back which slopes down to a ravine. Often we went walking there. You wore light garments those summer evenings and I carried heavy weapons that clanked against the trees.

"Don't you remember? Oh! try, Christiane! and your name is as familiar to me as those one hears from childhood! If we should look carefully at the stones of that fortress, we would find it carved by my own hand in the olden days! I assure you that I recognize my home, my native place, as I recognized you, you yourself, the very first time I saw you!"

He spoke with an exalted tone of conviction, intoxicated with poetry, by the presence of this woman, and by the night, the moon, and the ruin.

Suddenly he sank on his knees before Christiane, and in trembling tones murmured:

"Let me adore you still, now that I have found you once more! Think how long I have been seeking for you!"

She wished to rise, to leave, to rejoin her father;

but she had not the strength, she had not the courage, for she was held back by the burning wish to hear more, to listen on to these enchanting words that went to her heart. She felt borne away in a dream—in a dream that she had always longed for, so sweet, so poetic, full of the rays of moonlight and love ballads.

He had caught her hands and kissed the ends of her fingers, stammering:

"Christiane! Christiane! Take me! Kill me! I love you! Christiane!"

She felt him trembling, quivering at her feet. Now he was kissing her knees with great sobs. She feared he would go mad and rose to escape. But he had risen more quickly, and seizing her in his arms, pressed his lips against hers.

Then without a cry, as if his caress had crushed her will and robbed her of all powers of resistance, she sank into his arms like ripe fruit falling.

Then she rushed away distractedly, suddenly icy cold and shivering like a person who has just fallen into the water. He strode after her and caught her by the arm, whispering: "Christiane, Christiane! Be careful before your father!"

She walked on, not replying or looking back, but going straight on to her father.

Paul followed her without daring to speak to her.

As soon as the Marquis saw them he rose.

"Come along quickly," he said, "I was beginning to get cold. These scenes are very beautiful, but bad to combine with medical treatment."

As soon as she was back again in her room, she undressed in a few seconds and buried herself in her bed, hiding her head under the covers, then she wept. She wept with her face hidden in the pillow for a long, long time, feeling benumbed and prostrated.

She did not think, she did not suffer, she did not regret. She wept without thought, without reflection, without knowing why. She wept instinctively, as one sings when one is glad. Then when her tears were exhausted, overcome and worn out with sobbing, she fell asleep with fatigue and weariness.

She was awakened by light taps at the door of her room, which opened into the sitting-room. It was bright day, and just nine o'clock. She cried: "Come in!" And her husband entered, happy, bright, wearing a traveling cap, and carrying by his side a little bag with his money that he always took with him in traveling.

He exclaimed:

"What, you were still asleep, my dear! And it was I that woke you. Here I am! I came without sending any message. I hope you are feeling well. The weather is superb in Paris."

And he took off his cap and went to kiss her.

But she moved away towards the wall, seized with a foolish fear, a nervous dread of this little man, so rosy and contented, that turned his lips to hers.

Then suddenly, closing her eyes, she offered him her forehead. He calmly placed a kiss upon it and asked:

"May I wash a little in your dressing-room? As they did not expect me to-day, my room was not prepared for me."

She stammered:

"Why, certainly."

And he vanished through a door at the foot of the bed.

She heard him moving about, splashing the water, puffing and blowing, then he called out:

"What's the news here? For my part, I have splendid news. The analysis of the water has given

results even better than were hoped for. We can cure at least three diseases more than they can at Royat. It's splendid!"

She was sitting up in bed, choking, her mind all bewildered by this unexpected return, which struck her as a sudden pang and pressed on her heart as an agony of remorse. He had come back, contented, diffusing around him a strong fragrance of verbena. Then he sat familiarly on the foot of the bed, and asked:

"And the paralytic! How is he getting on? Has he begun to walk again, yet? It isn't possible that he won't be cured with what we have found in the water!"

She had forgotten about him for several days, and she stammered:

"Why—I—I think he is beginning to improve—really, I haven't seen him this week.—I—I am not very well."

He looked at her carefully and then replied:

"It's true, you are a little pale. But it is quite becoming to you. You are charming thus—altogether charming."

He drew closer to her, and leaning towards her, tried to put his arm around her waist.

But she shrank back with such terror that he was dazed and remained motionless, with his arms outstretched and his lips raised to hers. Then he asked:

"What's the matter with you? Can't anyone touch you any more? I assure you that I do not want to hurt you!"

Then he drew nearer with great affection.

But she stammered:

"No—leave me—leave me. It is—it is—I think——"

Then she whispered. And his face broke into smiles.

She had said this in an agony of mind, without a moment's thought, to avoid him.

He grew pale in his turn, touched with a deep joy, and he whispered only: "So soon!" He wished to caress her gently, tenderly, as a happy and grateful father. Then with a sudden doubt he said:

"Can it be true? You think it possible? So soon?"

She answered:

"Yes, it is possible!"

Then he jumped up and down the room for joy, and clapping his hands, cried:

"Christi, Christi, what a happy day!"

Once again there was a knock at the door. Andermatt opened it, and the chambermaid said to him:

"Dr. Latonne would like to speak at once to monsieur."

"Very well. Show him into our sitting-room and I will see him there."

He went into the next room, and the doctor came in at the same moment. His expression was very solemn, and his manner was cold and formal. He bowed, touched the hand that the banker in some surprise held out to him, sat down and explained the purpose of his visit in the serious tones of a second in a duelling affair.

"My dear sir, a very disagreeable circumstance has come up which I must tell you in order to explain my conduct. When you did me the honor of consulting me in regard to your wife, I hastened to her at the very hour you named; but it seems that several minutes before my arrival my confrère, the medical inspector, in whom no doubt Madame Andermatt feels more confidence, had been called by the Marquis of Ravenel. As a result, since I was the second to come, I seem to have taken by a ruse a patient away

from Dr. Bonnefille that he had already under his care. Thus I seem to have acted in a way that was discourteous, unbecoming, and unjustifiable between brother physicians. And in the practice of our art we must, monsieur, take all precautions and use great tact to avoid all affronts that may lead to serious consequences. Dr. Bonnefille was informed of my visit here, and as he thought me capable of such an act of discourtesy—appearances, indeed, being against me—has spoken of it in such terms, that if it were not for his age, I should have felt compelled to demand satisfaction from him. There is but one course for me to pursue to clear myself in his eyes and in the eyes of all the medical corps of the country, and that is to cease, to my great regret, from caring for your wife, and to tell you all the facts of the matter, begging you at the same time to accept my apologies."

Andermatt replied with embarrassment:

"I understand perfectly, doctor, the awkward position in which you are placed. The fault, however, is not mine nor my wife's, but my father-in-law's, who called M. Bonnefille without letting me know beforehand. Could I not find your colleague and tell him?"

Dr. Latonne interrupted him:

"It's useless, my dear sir, for a question of professional etiquette and honor is involved which I must respect before everything, and in spite of my sincere regrets——"

Andermatt in his turn interrupted him. The rich man—the man who could pay, the man who could buy a prescription of five, ten, twenty, or forty francs as if it were a three-cent box of matches, who thought that everything should belong to him because of the power of his money, who rated people

and things only by a money standard, by a rapid and direct ratio made between the coined metals and everything else in the world,—grew angry at the presumption of this dealer of remedies written on paper. He said stiffly:

"Very well, doctor, let the matter rest there. I only hope that this measure may not have an unfortunate influence on your career. We shall see in the future which of us will suffer most from your resolve."

The doctor, offended, rose, and bowing with formal politeness, said:

"I do not doubt, monsieur, that I shall be the one. What I have done to-day is very painful to me on all accounts. But I never hesitate between my interests and my conscience."

Then he left the room. As he passed through the door he ran against the Marquis, who was coming in with a letter in his hand. And M. Ravenel exclaimed, the moment he was alone with his son-in-law:

"Look, my dear fellow, here is a great annoyance that has come to me through your fault. Dr. Bonnefille, offended because you consulted his colleague in regard to Christiane, has sent me this very sharp note to the effect that I can no longer count on his professional experience."

Then Andermatt was furious. He walked up and down, growing more and more excited as he talked, and he gesticulated wildly, full of a harmless, superficial anger, one of those rages that no one takes seriously. He shouted out his arguments. Whose fault was it, after all? The Marquis alone was to blame for having called in that ass laden with a pack, Bonnefille, without even having told Andermatt, who had been informed, thanks to his Paris physician, as

to the relative worth of the three quacks at Enval!

And then what right had the Marquis to have a consultation made behind the husband's back,—the husband, who should be the sole judge, and alone responsible for his wife's health? Finally, it was the same way, every day, in everything! Those around him were all the time doing silly things, nothing but silly things! He was always saying this, but he was crying in a desert, for nc one understood, no one believed in his experience until it was too late.

And he said "my doctor," "my experience" with the authority of a man who has in reserve unique powers. The possessive pronouns rang in his mouth with the sonorous sound of metal. And when he said, "my wife," one felt it was very clear that the Marquis no longer had any right over his daughter since Andermatt had married her, marrying and buying having the same meaning in his mind.

Gontran came in during the hottest part of the discussion, and he sat down in an armchair with a smile of amusement on his lips. He said nothing; he listened, greatly entertained.

When the banker stopped for lack of breath, his brother-in-law raised his hand, crying:

"I ask for the floor. Here you both are without doctors, aren't you? Well, I propose the name of my candidate, Dr. Honorat, the only one who has a true knowledge of the waters of Enval. He makes other people drink it, but he would not drink it himself for anything in the world. Would you like me to go and look for him? I will arrange the whole matter."

It was the only course to pursue, and they asked Gontran to bring him at once. The Marquis, filled with uneasiness at the thought of a change of diet and nursing, wished to know immediately the advice

of this new doctor. And Andermatt was equally anxious to consult him in regard to Christiane.

She heard through the door the sound of their voices, without listening and without understanding what they were talking about. The moment her husband had left her she rose and dressed hurriedly, without the help of a maid, her mind agitated by all these events.

The world about her seemed to have changed, life itself was different from what it had been yesterday; even the people seemed altogether different.

Andermatt's voice rose again:

"Well, my dear Bretigny, how are you?"

He no longer said monsieur."

Another voice answered:

"Why, very well, indeed, my dear Andermatt. So you just came this morning?"

Christiane, who was just putting up her hair, paused, choking, and stood with her arm still raised. Through the wall she fancied that she could see them, shaking hands. She sank into a chair, unable to stand longer, and her hair, uncoiling, fell back over her shoulders.

It was Paul who was now speaking, and she quivered from head to foot at every word that fell from his lips. Each word, although she could not grasp its meaning fell on her heart and rang there like a hammer striking a bell.

All at once she said almost aloud: "But I love him. I love him!" as if she were stating a new and surprising fact that saved her, that consoled her, that vindicated her innocence before her conscience. She sat upright with sudden energy, and in a second her course was chosen. She began again to arrange her hair, whispering: "I have a lover, that is all. I have a lover."

Then to strengthen her position more, to free herself from all anguish, she suddenly resolved with an ardent enthusiasm to love him desperately, to give him her life, her happiness, to sacrifice everything for him, in accordance with the exalted morality of those scrupulous but vanquished hearts that imagine they will be made pure by devotion and truth.

And behind the wall that separated them she threw him kisses. It was done. She gave herself to him wholly, as one might offer oneself to a god. The child that had already become a coquette and artful but still timid and trembling, suddenly had died within her, and the woman was born ready for passion. A woman firm, tenacious, that up to yesterday had been revealed only in the energy hidden in the blue eye, which gave a look of courage, almost of boldness, to the tiny, blonde face.

She heard the door open and without turning divined that it was her husband without seeing him. It was as if a new sense, almost an instinct, had also developed in her.

He asked:

"Will you soon be ready? We are going right away to watch the paralytic bathe, to see if he is really better."

She answered calmly:

"Yes, Will dear, in five minutes."

But Gontran, who had returned to the sitting-room, called Andermatt.

"Just imagine," said he, "I met that imbecile Honorat in the park and he refuses also to take care of you, through fear of the others. He speaks of precedents, respect, customs. One would think—he looked as if—briefly, he is a fool like his two colleagues. Really, I would have thought him less of an ape."

The Marquis' hopes were cast down to the ground. The thought of taking mineral waters without a physician, the possibility of bathing five minutes too long, or of drinking a glassful too little, tortured him with anxiety. He conceived of all the doses, the hours, and the phases of treatment as being ruled directly by a law of nature, who had invalids in mind when she made the waters flow, and that the doctors knew all the mysterious secrets like wise and inspired priests.

He cried:

"So we are to perish here! One could die like a dog without any of these gentlemen troubling themselves!"

And he was filled with rage—the selfish, furious rage that of a man whose health is threatened.

"Have they the right to do this, just because they pay for a license like grocers, these scoundrels? One should have the right to force them to take care of people, as trains are obliged to carry all passengers. I am going to write to the newspapers to call attention to this."

He walked to and fro agitatedly, then he resumed, turning towards his son:

"Listen, we must call one in from Royat or Clermont. We cannot stay thus!"

Gontran answered, laughing:

"But the doctors of Clermont and Royat do not know all the properties of the Enval water, which has not precisely the same effect as theirs on the digestive tube and the circulatory system. And then you may be sure that they would avoid appearing to take the ground from under the feet of their colleagues."

The Marquis, quite frightened, faltered:

"Then what will become of us?"

Andermatt caught up his hat.

"Let me manage it, and I promise you that we shall have all three—do you realize it?—all three at our feet by this evening. Come, let us go now and see the paralytic."

He called:

"Are you ready, Christiane?"

She appeared on the threshold, very pale but determined. When she had kissed her father and her brother, she turned to Paul and held out her hand to him. He took it with downcast eyes, trembling with emotion. As the Marquis, Andermatt, and Gontran had gone on ahead, chatting together without noticing them, she said in a firm voice, while she looked tenderly and resolutely at the young man:

"I am yours, body and soul."

Then she went out without letting him reply.

As they neared the Oriol's spring they saw the hat of Père Clovis, like an enormous mushroom. He was sleeping in the sunshine in the warm water in the bottom of his hole. He now spent his entire mornings there, accustomed to the scorching bath that made him feel, he said, merrier than a bridegroom."

Andermatt woke him.

"Well, my good fellow, are you getting better?"

As soon as he recognized his patron the old rascal gave a grin of satisfaction.

"Yes, yes, I am getting on, getting on as well as you please."

"Are you beginning to walk?"

"Like a hare, sir, like a hare. I will dance a *boree* with my sweetheart the first Sunday of the month."

Andermatt's heart beat fast with joy. He asked:

"Really, can you walk?"

Père Clovis stopped joking.

" Oh, not much, not much. No matter, I am getting on."

Then the banker wanted to see at once how the vagabond walked. He went to and fro around the hole, in a state of excitement, issuing orders as if he were getting a ship afloat again after it had sunk.

" Here, Gontran, take his right arm, you, Bretigny, his left. I will support his back. Come, all together—one, two, three. My dear father-in-law, pull his leg towards you—no, the other, the one that is still in the water. Hurry, I beg you, I can't hold out much longer ! Now we're ready,—one, two, three,—ouf !"

They seated the old fellow on the ground. He let them do as they wished with a bantering look, and did not assist them at all in their efforts.

Then they raised him again and set him on his feet, giving him his crutches, which he used as canes. He began to walk, bent double, dragging his feet, whining and panting. He crept along like a snail and left behind him a long trail of water on the white dust of the road.

Andermatt, wild with enthusiasm, clapped his hands, and shouted as one does at the theatre to applaud the actors: " Bravo, bravo, splendid, bravo ! ! ! " Then as the old rascal seemed weak, he rushed up to support him, and caught him in his arms although his clothes were streaming, and he said:

" That's enough. Don't fatigue yourself. We will put you back again in the bath."

And Père Clovis was plunged again into his hole by the four men who had grasped his four limbs and carried him with care, like a fragile and valuable object.

Then the paralytic declared in a tone of conviction:

"It's good water all the same, good water that has no equal. That is worth a treasure, water like that!"

Andermatt turned suddenly to his father-in-law.

"Don't wait for me at lunch. I am going over to the Oriols, and I don't know when I shall be at leisure. It's not well to let these matters drag."

And he left hastily, almost on a run, twirling his stick like a man who is perfectly delighted.

The others sat down under the willows on the roadside, facing Père Clovis' hole.

Christiane, sitting by Paul, gazed before her at the high knoll where she had seen the great rock blown up. She was there that day, hardly a month ago. She was sitting on that russet grass. One month! Not more than a month! She recalled the slightest details, the tri-color parasols, the scullions, the lightest words of any of them! And the dog, the poor dog that was blown to pieces by the explosion! And this tall stranger who had rushed at a word of hers to save the creature! To-day he was her lover, her lover! So she had a lover. She was his—she was his! She repeated this in the depths of her consciousness. How strange! This man sitting beside her, whose hand she saw plucking one by one the blades of grass near her dress that he sought to touch, this man was now linked to her by that mysterious chain that nature has stretched between woman and man.

With that voice of thought, that mute voice that seems to speak so loudly in the silences of troubled souls, she repeated ceaselessly: "I am his! I am his!" How strange it was and how unlooked for!

"And do I love him?" She cast a quick glance

at him. Their eyes met, and she felt so caressed by his passionate look that she trembled from head to foot. She had a longing—a wild, irresistible longing—to take that hand that was playing in the grass, and to clasp it tight to express to him all that one can by an embrace. She let hers slide along her dress to the grass, where she let it lie motionless. Then she saw the other coming softly like a creature in search of its mate. They came nearer and nearer, and their little fingers touched. They barely touched, so softly did they meet, lost and found one another again, like lips that caress. But this imperceptible caress, this light touch, affected her so strongly that she felt herself on the point of fainting.

And she realized suddenly how one can belong to someone. How one's personality is lost in the love that takes possession of one. How a being can take one body and soul all, all that is in one, like a broad-winged bird of prey swooping down on a wren.

The Marquis and Gontran talked about the future watering resort, for they were themselves won over by Will's enthusiasm. And they talked of the banker's merits, the clearness of his mind, the certainty of his speculative methods, the boldness of his actions, and the stability of his character. Father-in-law and brother-in-law both, in view of the probable success, that they felt was certain, agreed in congratulating themselves on this alliance.

Christiane and Paul did not seem to hear, they were thinking so much of each other.

The Marquis said to his daughter: "Ah, darling, you may easily be one day one of the richest women of France, and people will speak of you as they do of the Rothschilds. Will is really a remarkable man, very remarkable—a wonderful mind."

But a sudden strange jealousy entered Paul's heart.

"Oh, don't speak of it! I know it, the intelligence of all those business-brewers. They have but one thing in their heads—money! All the thought that we give to beautiful things, all the time for actions that we lose in dreaming, all the hours that we throw away on amusements, all the energy that we squander on our pleasures, all the ardor and power that love takes from us, divine love, they devote to seeking gold, thinking of gold, piling up gold! The true man, the man of real intelligence, lives for the sake of all the great disinterested devotions, the arts, love, science, travels, books; and if he does seek for money, it is merely because that facilitates the real pleasures of the mind and even the happiness of the heart. But those men have nothing in their minds and hearts but the sordid taste for trade. These superficial men bear the same relation to men of true worth that the picture dealer does to the artist, the editor to the author, and the theater manager to the dramatic poet."

He stopped suddenly, realizing that he had allowed himself to be carried away, and he continued more calmly:

"I don't mean that at all in regard to Andermatt, who I think is a charming man. I like him very much, because he is a hundred times better than all the others."

Christiane had drawn away her hand. Paul again stopped talking. Gontran began to laugh, and in his mischievous voice, in which he ventured to say anything when he was in a teasing mood, said:

"In my case, my dear fellow, that kind of men have one merit, and that is to marry our sisters and to have rich daughters who become our wives."

The Marquis, offended, rose to his feet.

"Oh, Gontran!" he cried, "sometimes you are really revolting."

Paul then turned to Christiane and whispered:

"Would they know how to die for a woman, or even to give her all their fortune—all—without keeping anything?"

That said so clearly: "Everything I have is yours, even to my life," that she was touched, and she devised this trick to take his hands.

"Please rise and help me up. I am so numb I cannot move."

He rose, caught her by the wrists and raised her to her feet on the edge of the road close beside him. She saw his lips falter: "I love you!" and she turned quickly so as not to answer him in these three words that flashed to her lips despite her.

They returned to the hotel.

As the bathing hour had passed, they waited for lunch time. When it was announced there was no sign of Andermatt, after another walk around the park they decided to sit down at table. The meal, although long, was ended without the banker's appearing. So they went down again to sit under the trees. And the hours, one after another passed. The sunlight crept from the trees towards the mountains. The day ebbed away, but still Will did not appear.

Suddenly they caught sight of him. He was walking fast, holding his hat in his hand, wiping his forehead, his cravat was on one side, his vest half-open, and he looked as one does after a voyage, after a struggle, after a terrible and prolonged strife.

The moment he saw his father-in-law, he shouted:

"Victory! It's done! but what a day, my friends! Ah, the old fox, he gave me a hard time of it!"

And he told at once of the steps he had taken, and his difficulties.

Père Oriol had at first shown himself so unreasonable that Andermatt had broken up the negotiations and left. Then they had called him back. The peasant maintained that he would not sell his lands, but he would assign them to the Company with the right to recover them in case of failure. He demanded half the proceeds in case of success.

The banker had had to prove to him with figures on paper and diagrams to represent the pieces of property, that the fields in all were not worth more than forty thousand francs, market value, while the expenses of the Company would rise at one stroke to a million.

But the peasant of Auvergne had answered that he expected to benefit by the enormous increase of value given to his property by the establishment and the hotels, and that he should draw interest on the basis of the increased value, and not the past value.

Andermatt then had to show him that the risks would be proportioned to the possible gains, and thus to terrify him with fears of loss.

Finally they had reached this conclusion: Père Oriol would assign to the Company all the lands extending along the banks of the stream. That included all those where it seemed possible to find mineral water. Then in addition, the crest of the knoll for the erection of the casino and a hotel, and also some vineyards on the slope that were to be cut up into lots and offered to the leading physicians of Paris.

The peasant, in return for this assignment—which was valued at two hundred and fifty thousand francs, or about four times its actual value—would be entitled to one-fourth of the Company's profits.

As he still owned ten times more land than he assigned around the establishment, he was sure, in case of success, of making a fortune by the careful sale of these lands, which he said would be his daughters' dowries.

As soon as these conditions were agreed to, Will had had to drag the father and son to the notary's to have a promise of sale drawn up, under the condition that it would be annulled if the required amount of water was not found.

And the drawing up of these conditions, the discussion on each point, the endless repetitions of the same arguments, the everlasting recommencement of the same line of reasoning, had continued through the entire afternoon. At last it was done. The banker had his watering resort. But he said, torn by regrets:

" But I shall have to limit myself to the water rights, and not think about the property. He was sharp, the old ape! "

Then he added:

" Bah! I'll buy up the old Company's property and that will give me a chance for speculation. Well, anyway, I must go back to Paris to-night."

The Marquis, astonished, cried:

" What, to-night? "

" Yes, my dear father-in-law, to arrange a final contract while M. Aubry-Pasteur makes the borings. Then I must also make arrangements to have the work begin in fifteen days. I haven't an hour to lose. And apropos of all this, I must tell you that you are a member of my board of directors, in which I shall need a strong majority. I will make you a present of ten shares. And, Gontran, I will also give you ten shares."

Gontran laughed.

" Thank you very much, my dear fellow, I'll sell them back to you. That makes you in debt to me five thousand francs."

But Andermatt was not in a joking mood when such serious matters were under discussion. He answered dryly:

" If you are not in earnest, I will address myself to someone else."

Gontran stopped laughing.

" No, no, my good friend, you know that I am wholly devoted to your interests."

The banker turned to Paul.

" My dear sir, would you do me a friendly service. That is, to also accept ten shares and act as a director? "

Paul replied with a bow.

" Will you allow me to decline your kind offer, and to invest a hundred thousand francs in this enterprise which I think has a splendid future? It is I then who ask a favor of you."

William, delighted, grasped his hand, overcome by such a mark of confidence. Besides, he always felt an irresistible desire to embrace anyone who furnished him with money, for his enterprises.

But Christiane blushed to her temples. It seemed as if they had just bought and sold her. If he had not loved her, would Paul have offered these hundred thousand francs to her husband? Unquestionably, no! At least he should not have carried on this transaction before her.

The dinner-bell rang, and they returned to the hotel. The moment they had taken their places at table, Madame Paille, the mother, asked Andermatt:

" So you are going to found another establishment? "

The news had already spread throughout the

whole place. Everybody knew about it and all the bathers were excited.

William replied:

"*Mon Dieu,* yes. The present one is too inadequate."

And turning to M. Aubry-Pasteur, he said:

"Will you pardon me, my dear sir, if I speak at table of a matter that I should rather have mentioned to you in private; but I leave again to-night for Paris, and time presses, terribly. Would you consent to superintend the work of excavating for a greater volume of water?"

The engineer, flattered, accepted and in the midst of a general pause in the conversation, they arranged all the essential points of the prospecting, which was to begin at once. Everything was discussed and decided upon in a few minutes with the clearness and precision that Andermatt always brought to bear in business. Then they spoke of the paralytic. He had been seen crossing the park in the afternoon, using only one cane, although that very morning he had leaned on two. The banker said: "It's a miracle, a real miracle. His cure is progressing with giant strides."

Paul, to humor the husband, said:

"It's Père Clovis, himself, who is walking with giant strides."

An approving laugh circled the table. All eyes were fixed on Will and all lips complimented him. The waiters of the restaurant had commenced to serve him first with a respectful deference that vanished from their faces and gestures the moment they passed a dish to any of his neighbors.

One of them brought him a card on a plate.

He took it and read aloud:

"Dr. Latonne of Paris would be happy if M.

Andermatt could kindly grant him a few seconds for an interview before his departure."

"Tell him that I have not time, but that I will be back in eight or ten days."

At the same moment they brought a box of flowers to Christiane from Dr. Honorat.

Gontran laughted.

"Père Bonnefille is a poor third," he said.

Dinner was nearly finished. They brought word to Andermatt that his carriage was waiting. He went upstairs for his little bag, and when he came down to the door, he found half the village gathered there. Petrus Martel came forward to grasp his hand with the familiarity of a strolling actor, and whispered in his ear:

"I shall have a proposition to make to you, something fundamentally important for your undertaking."

Suddenly, Dr. Bonnefille appeared, hurrying as usual. He came close to Will, and bowing very low as he did before the Marquis, he said:

"A pleasant journey, Baron."

"He's won," Gontran whispered.

Andermatt triumphant, filled with joy and pride, shook hands with everybody, thanked them all and repeated over and over: "*Au revoir!*" But he almost forgot to kiss his wife, he was so taken up with other matters. This carelessness was a relief to her, and as she watched the landau disappearing in the distance, on the dusky road, drawn rapidly by two horses, it seemed to her as though she had nothing to fear from anyone for the rest of her life.

She passed the whole evening sitting in front of the hotel, between her father and Paul Bretigny. Gontran had gone to the Casino, as he did every day.

She did not want to walk nor to talk, and sat

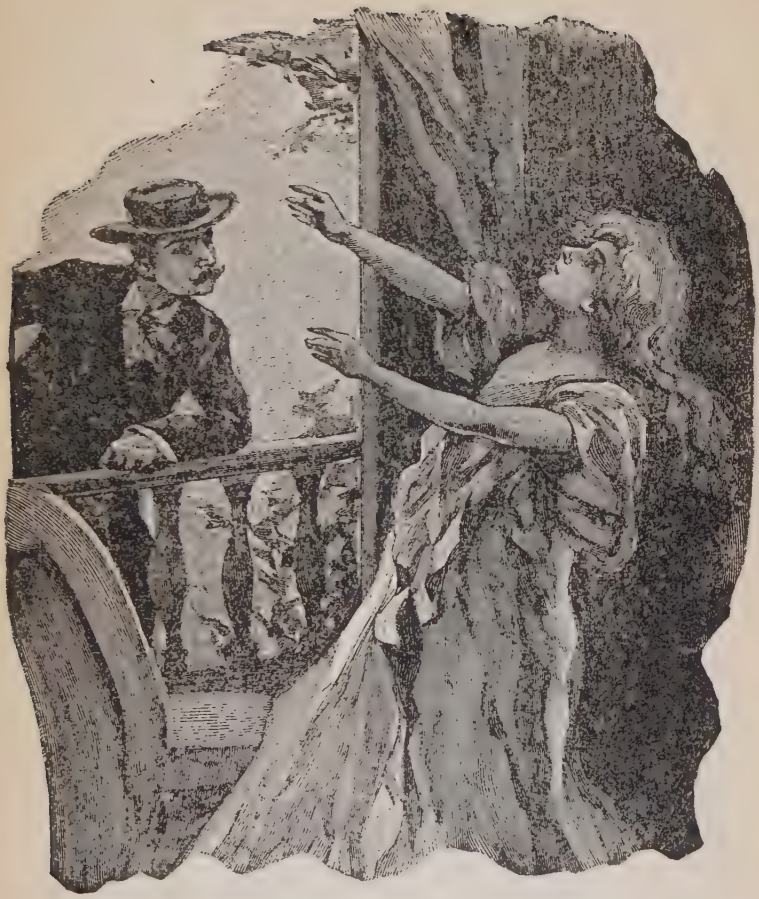
motionless, her hands clasped on her lap, her eyes gazing into the darkness. She felt tired and languid, a little uneasy, yet happy, hardly thinking, not even dreaming, striving at moments against vague feelings of remorse which she quelled by repeating to herself always: "I love him, I love him, I love him!"

She went early to her room, to be alone and think. Sitting in the depths of an armchair and wrapped in a dressing gown that floated about her she looked at the stars through her open window. And in the frame of that window, she called up in fancy every instant, the image of the one who had won her heart. She saw him, kind, gentle and intense, so strong yet so yielding to her. The man had taken possession of her, she felt it, taken possession of her forever. She was no longer alone; they were two whose two hearts would form but a single heart, whose two souls would form but a single soul. Where he was she did not know, but she knew well that he was dreaming of her, as she was of him. At every heartbeat she fancied that she could hear another somewhere answering hers. She felt all around her a passion that soared over her like the wings of a bird in flight. She felt this longing streaming in through the open window, this ardent longing that came from him who was seeking her and entreating her in the silence of the night. How good it was, sweet and novel to be loved. What joy to think of someone with tears gathering in one's eyes, to weep with tenderness, and with a longing to stretch one's arms towards him even without seeing him, to call him, to open wide one's arms toward one's vision of him, towards that kiss that he was endlessly throwing from far or near, in the fever of his waiting.

And she stretched out her two arms, so white

from the hanging sleeves of her dressing gown, towards the stars. Suddenly she uttered a cry. A tall, dark shadow strode over her balcony and leaped in through her window.

She sprang up wildly! It was he! And without even thinking that they might be seen, she threw herself on his breast.



CHAPTER VIII

PLOTS AND PLANS

ANDERMATT'S absence was prolonged. M. Aubry-Pasteur meanwhile made the excavations. He discovered four new springs which would give twice as much water as would be required by the new company. The whole country round had gone crazy over the prospecting, the discovery of the new springs, and the wonderful news of a brilliant future for the place. The people were so excited and enthusiastic that they could not talk or think of anything else. The Marquis and Gontran themselves passed their days watching the workmen who tapped the fissures in the granite, and they listened with growing interest to the explanations and instructions of the engineer on the geological structure of Auvergne. And Paul and Christiane loved one another freely, calmly, in absolute security, without anyone's thinking of them, without anyone's suspecting anything, for all interest was absorbed in the future resort.

Christiane had been as a youth who is intoxicated for the first time. The first glass, the first kiss, had scorched her and made her dizzy. She had swallowed the second quickly and found it better, and now she eagerly drained the intoxicating glass.

Since the evening when Paul had entered her room, she no longer was aware of what was going on in the world around her. Time, events, persons,

no longer existed for her; nothing existed any longer but one man. There was no longer anything on the earth or in the sky save one man, one man alone, the one she loved. Her eyes saw nothing but him, her mind dwelt only on him, her hopes rested only on him. She lived, moved about, ate, dressed, seemed to listen and reply, without understanding and without knowing what she was doing. No apprehensions haunted her, for no calamity could have touched her. She had become insensible to everything. No physical pain could have had power over her body, which love alone could make tremble. No normal suffering could have had power over her soul, which was benumbed with happiness.

Besides, his loving her with the intensity that he showed in all his love affairs, roused the young woman's affection to frenzy. Often towards the close of the day, when he knew that the Marquis and Gontran had gone to the spring, he would say: "Let us go and see our heaven." He called their heaven a pine grove high up on the slope, even above the gorge. They walked up there across a little wood, along a steep footpath that made Christiane quite breathless. As they had only a short time, they walked rapidly, and that she might be less wearied, he supported her with his arm around her waist. Placing one hand on his shoulder, she let herself be carried along, and sometimes she would throw her arms around his neck and touch his lips with hers. As they ascended the slope the air grew more invigorating and when they reached the pine grove the odor of the rosin refreshed them like a breath of the sea.

They sat under the dark trees, she on a grassy knoll, and he lower down, at her feet. The wind among the trees murmured that sweet song of the

pines with its plaintive strain. The vast plain of Limagne, fading away into the unseen distance, veiled in haze, gave them exactly the same feeling as the ocean. Yes, surely, the sea was there, stretching away before them! They could not doubt it, for its cool breath was wafted to their faces!

He used with her the coaxing ways that one uses to a child.

"Give me your fingers to eat; they are my own bon-bons."

And he took them one after another in his mouth, and pretended to taste them with the delight of a gourmand.

"Oh! how good they are! The little one especially! I have never eaten anything better than the little one!"

Then he kneeled, and resting his elbows on Christiane's lap, he whispered:

"Liane, will you look at me?"

He called her Liane because she twined towards him as a vine twines round a tree.

"Look at me! I am going to enter your soul."

And they looked at one another with that fixed, persistent gaze that seems really to blend two beings together.

"One does not truly love except in this possession of one another," he said.

And face to face, their breath mingling, they fondly looked for one another in the mirror of their eyes.

He murmured:

"I see you, Liane, I see your loved heart!"

She answered:

"I too, Paul, I see your heart."

And, indeed, they both saw through one another to the depths of heart and soul, for there was noth-

ing in their hearts and souls but a wild, glowing love for one another.

He said:

" Liane, your eye is like the sky! It is so blue, with so many reflections and such wonderful clearness! I fancy I see swallows flitting through. Are they then your thoughts? "

And when they had gazed thus at each other for a long, long time, they drew nearer together, and gently caressed, gazing again into one another's eyes between each kiss. Sometimes he would catch her up in his arms and run with her along the stream that flows towards the gorges of Enval ere it plunges into them. It was a narrow valley with alternating meadows and woods. Paul ran over the grass, and every now and then he raised the young woman up, as high as his powerful arms would reach, and he would cry:

" Liane, let us fly away! "

And love, their passionate love, inspired them with this harassing, incessant and sad longing to fly away. Everything around them sharpened this yearning of their souls. The light air—as light as a bird, he said—and the vast blue horizon into which they would have liked to fly together, holding one another's hands, and to vanish above the infinite plain when the darkness of night spread over it. They would have flown thus across the sky, dusky with night, never to return. Where would they have gone? They did not know at all—but what a beautiful dream!

When he was breathless from having run with her in his arms, he placed her on a rock to kneel before her. And kissing her ankles, he whispered tender words and adored her.

If they had lived in a city, their passion, no doubt,

would have been different, more cautious, more sensuous, less airy and less romantic. But there, in that green country, whose horizon widened the emotions of the soul, alone, with nothing to distract, to diminish their wakened instinct of love, they had thrown themselves suddenly into a wildly poetic tenderness of ecstasy and fancy. The landscape around them, the warm breeze, the woods, the fragrant odors of this country, sang to them through all the days and the nights the music of their love. And that music had roused them to frenzy, like the notes of the tambourines and the shrill flutes that drive the whirling dervish to acts of mad unreason.

One evening, as they were going in to dinner, the Marquis said all at once:

"Andermatt will be back in four days. Everything is arranged. The rest of us will leave the day after his return. We have been here now a very long time, and it is not well to extend the season at the mineral waters too long."

They were as much astounded as if someone had told them that the world was coming to an end. Neither spoke during the meal, so anxiously were they wondering what would take place. Then they were to be separated in a few days, and could no longer see one another freely. That seemed to them so impossible and so strange that they could not realize it.

Andermatt did, indeed, return at the end of the week. He had sent a telegram ordering two landaus to meet the first train. Christiane, who had not slept at all, harassed by a strange new emotion, a sort of fear of her husband—a fear mingled with anger, of inexplicable dislike and a desire to defy him—had risen at daybreak and was waiting for him. He arrived in the first carriage and was ac-

companied by three well-dressed men with very deferential manners. The second landau brought four more, who seemed a little beneath the others in social position. The Marquis and Gontran were filled with wonder.

The former asked:

"Who are these people?"

"My shareholders. We are going to organize the Company this very day and appoint the board of directors at once."

He kissed his wife without speaking to her and scarcely even seeing her, he was so pre-occupied, and, turning towards the seven gentlemen, who stood respectfully and silently behind him, he said:

"Have them serve you with breakfast, and then take a walk. We will meet again here at noon."

They withdrew in silence, like soldiers obeying orders, and, going up the steps two by two, they disappeared in the hotel.

Gontran, who watched them filing off, asked with a very serious look:

"Where did you pick up your supers?"

The banker smiled:

"They are very good men, moneyed men, capitalists."

And he added, after a pause, with a more evident smile:

"Who look after my business."

Then he went to the notary's to read over the instruments of which he had sent the originals all prepared several days before.

He found Dr. Latonne there, with whom he had lately exchanged several letters. They talked a long time together, in a low voice, in a corner of the office, while the clerks' pens flew over the papers, making a slight noise like that of insects.

The meeting to organize the Company was set for two o'clock.

The notary's office had been arranged as if for a concert. Two rows of chairs were placed for the shareholders facing the table where Maître Alain was to sit beside his chief clerk. Maître Alain had put on his lawyer's gown in deference to the importance of the business. He was a very little man, a ball of white, stuttering flesh.

Andermatt entered just as two o'clock struck. He was accompanied by the Marquis, his brother-in-law, and Bretigny, and was followed by the seven gentlemen whom Gontran called the supers. He had the air of a general. Père Oriol appeared at the same time with Colosse. They seemed uneasy, distrustful as peasants always are when they are going to sign papers. Dr. Latonne was the last to arrive. He had made peace with Andermatt by a complete surrender, preceded by cleverly turned apologies, and followed by an offer of his services without reserve or restrictions.

Then the banker, feeling sure of him, had promised him the envied position of medical inspector of the new establishment.

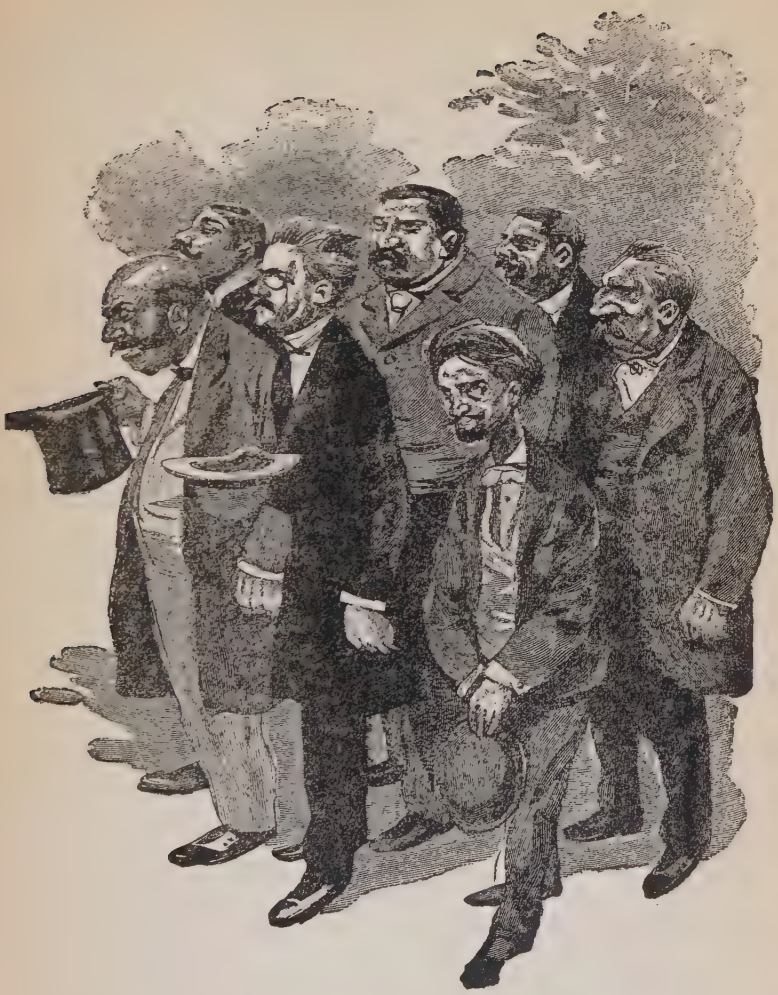
When everyone had come in, a profound silence reigned.

The notary took the floor.

" Gentlemen, be seated." He said a few words more, but no one heard in the noise of moving the chairs.

Andermatt took up a chair and placed it facing his army, so as to have his eye on everyone, then he said, when he was seated:

" Gentlemen, I have no need to explain to you the motive of our meeting. We will first organize the new Company in which you have consented to



become shareholders. I must, however, inform you of some details which have caused no little difficulty. It was incumbent on me, before I took any measures, to have the assurance that we could obtain the necessary authorization to develop a new establishment for the use of the public. I now have that assurance. What remains to be done in that connection I will do. I have the Minister's promise. But I was delayed by another point. We are going, gentlemen, to fight against the old Company of the waters of Enval. We will come out victors in this strife, victors and rich, you may be sure of that. But as the warriors of old needed a war-cry, so we who are fighting in modern warfare need a name for our resort. It must be a musical, attractive name, well adapted for advertising, one which will strike the ear like the note of a clarion, and catch the eye like a lightning flash. Now, gentlemen, we are at Enval and we cannot rename the place. The only thing for us to do is to give our establishment, just our establishment, a new name.

" That is what I propose.

" If our bathing-house is situated at the foot of the knoll which is owned by M. Oriol, who is present here, our future casino should be placed on the crest of the same knoll. Then we could say that this hill, this mountain—for it is a low mountain—is the site of our establishment, since we own the foot and the summit. For this reason, isn't it natural to call our baths the baths of Mont-Oriol? Thus we will associate with the resort, which is destined to become one of the most important in the whole world, the name of its original owner. Let us render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.

" And notice, gentlemen, that this name is very well adapted for the purpose. People will say Mont-

Oriol just as they say Mont-Doré. It impresses the eye and lingers in the ear. One reads it at a glance, catches the sound readily, and it stays in one's memory. Mont-Oriol! Mont-Oriol! The baths of Mont-Oriol! ''

And Andermatt made the word ring, hurling it out like a cannon-ball, and listening to the echo.

He continued, imitating dialogues:

'' Are you going to the baths of Mont-Oriol? ''

'' Yes, Madame, they say they are perfectly wonderful, the mineral waters of Mont-Oriol.''

'' They are, indeed, splendid. Mont-Oriol, besides, is a lovely place.''

And he smiled, and acted as if he were chatting, changing his tone of voice when the lady spoke, and raising his hand in salute to indicate the gentleman.

Then he resumed in his natural voice:

'' Has anyone any objection to make? ''

The shareholders answered in chorus:

'' No, none.''

Three of the supers applauded.

Père Oriol, touched, flattered, captivated, and completely won over by this appeal to the innate pride of the *parvenu* peasant, smiled as he turned his hat in his hands, and nodded '' yes.'' In spite of himself it was a '' yes '' that revealed his delight and which Andermatt observed without seeming to be watching.

Colosse remained impassive, but was as well pleased as his father. Then Andermatt said to the notary:

'' Will you kindly read the document for the incorporation of the Company, Maître Alain? ''

And he sat down.

The notary said to his clerk:

"Go on, Marinet."

Marinet, who was a poor consumptive, coughed, and then intoning like a priest, and with great attempts at elocution, began to enumerate the statutes relating to the incorporation of an anonymous Company, called the Company of the Hot Springs establishment of Mont-Oriol, at Enval, with a capitalization of two millions.

Père Oriol interrupted him.

"One moment, one moment," he said. And he drew from his pocket a greasy paper that for eight days past had made the rounds of all the lawyers and business men of that section of the country. It was a copy of the statutes which he and his son would soon know by heart.

Then he slowly placed his spectacles on his nose, bent down his head, turned so the best light fell on the page, and then gave the order.

"Go now, Marinet."

Colosse, who had drawn his chair up closer, also compared his father's paper with what was read.

And Marinet began over again. The older Oriol, distracted by the double effort of listening and reading at once, tortured, too, by the fear that one word might be changed, filled also with the desire to see whether Andermatt did not make any secret sign to the notary, did not let more than one line pass without stopping the clerk ten times and interrupting all his attempts at oratory.

He asked:

"You say? What was that you said then? I did not catch it! Not so fast!"

Then, turning slightly towards his son, he asked:

"Is it this, Colosse?"

Colosse, more self-possessed, answered:

"It's all right, father, let him go on, let him go on, it's all right!"

The peasant felt no confidence. With the end of his crooked finger, he followed along on the paper, muttering the words under his breath. But he could not fix his attention on the two things at once, when he listened, he could not read any more, and when he read, he could not listen at all. He panted as if he had climbed up a mountain, he perspired as if he had been digging his vineyard in the hot sun, and from time to time he asked for several minutes' rest, to wipe his forehead and get his breath, like a man fighting a duel.

Andrematt, losing patience, tapped the floor with his foot. Gontran saw the copy of the *Moniteur du-Puy-de-Dome* lying on a table and took it to read. Paul, sitting astride his chair, with bent head and shrinking heart, was thinking that this little, rosy-cheeked man who sat in front of him was going on the next day to take away the woman that he loved with his whole soul, Christiane, his Christiane, his fair Christiane, who was his, wholly his, and only his. And he was wondering whether he himself would not carry her away that very evening.

The seven gentlemen sat seriously and patiently waiting.

At the close of an hour it was finished. The papers were signed.

The notary drew up certificates of payments. When he was called upon, the cashier, M. Abraham Levy, stated that he had received the funds. Then the Company was legally organized. It was then at once called for a general meeting, as all the shareholders were present, to nominate the board of directors and elect the president.

All the votes except two were in favor of Ander-

matt as president. The two dissenting votes, of the peasant and his son, had nominated Oriol. Bretigny was made inspecting commissioner.

Then the board, composed of MM. Andermatt, the Marquis, and the Count of Ravenel, Bretigny, the Oriols, father and son, Dr. Latonne, Abraham Levy, and Simon Zidler, requested the rest of the shareholders to withdraw as well as the notary and his clerk, so that they could deliberate over the first resolutions and arrange the more important points.

Andermatt rose again.

" Gentlemen, we are entering on the vital question, that of success, which we must win at all costs.

" With mineral waters it is just as with everything else. They must be talked about everywhere and on all occasions, so as to get invalids to drink them.

" The great problem of modern times, gentlemen, is advertising. But the art of advertising is difficult, complex, and calls for the greatest tact. Those who first adopted this new method used it crudely and attracted much attention by noise, beating drums and firing cannon. Mangin, gentlemen, was only a pioneer. To-day sensational methods are regarded with suspicion, striking placards provoke only smiles, names shouted in the streets rouse more distrust than interest. Yet we must gain the attention of the public, and when we have caught it, we must hold it. The art thus lies in discovering a method, the sole method that will succeed, depending on what we have for sale. Now we, gentlemen, want to sell water. Therefore, it is through doctors that we must secure the invalids.

" The most celebrated doctors, gentlemen, are men like ourselves, who like ourselves have weaknesses. I do not wish to imply that they could be

bribed. The reputation of the masters of the profession of whom we have need places them beyond all suspicion of graft. But what man is there whom one cannot win, if one gets the right hold? Just as there are women who cannot be bought, but must be won by fascination.

" This, then, gentlemen, is the proposition that I would like to place before you, after having talked it over for a long time with Dr. Latonne.

" We have first classified in three principal groups the diseases that can be benefited by our treatment. They are: first, rheumatism in all its forms, skin disease, arthritis, gout, etc., etc.; second, disorders of the stomach, alimentary tract, and liver; third, all diseases arising from disturbances of the circulation—for it is an indisputable fact that our acidulated baths have a wonderful effect on the circulation.

" Furthermore, gentlemen, the marvellous cure of Père Clovis foretells miracles.

" Then after classifying the diseases that call for the thermal treatment, we are going to make to the leading specialists in those subjects the following proposition: ' Gentlemen,' we will say, ' come and see, come and see with your own eyes, and watch the effects on your own patients, we invite you to come as our guests. The country round is superb, you need relaxation after your hard winter's work. Come. And come, learned doctors, not to our homes but to your own, for we offer you each a châlet, which will be yours if you wish it, on exceptionally good terms.' "

Andermatt took a moment's rest and resumed in a calmer tone:

" This is the way that I have worked out this idea. We have chosen six plots of land, each of a

thousand meters. On all these six lots the Bernese Company of Portable Châlets have agreed to erect a model house. We then, gratuitously, place these villas, which will be as elegant as comfortable, at the disposal of our physicians. If they are pleased with them, they will only have to buy the houses from the Bernese Company, for as far as the land is concerned we will give it to them . . . and they will pay us . . . in invalids. In this way, gentlemen, we shall reap many advantages. We will cover our land with charming villas that will cost us nothing, we will attract the leading physicians of the world, and their legion of patients, and, above all, we shall convince these eminent doctors, who will soon become property owners in the place, of the efficacy of our mineral waters. As far as regards all the negotiations leading to these results, I will take care of them, gentlemen, and I will conduct them not as a speculator but as a man of the world."

Père Oriol interrupted him. His parsimony, characteristic of Auvergne, was roused at the project of giving away the land.

Andermatt then burst into oratory. He compared the noble agriculturist who casts the seed by handfuls upon the fertile soil, to the avaricious peasant who counts the grains and never reaps more than half a harvest.

Then as Oriol, who was vexed at this, grew obstinate in his objections, the banker put the matter before the board and closed the old man's mouth with a vote of six against two.

Then he opened a large morocco portfolio and drew out the plans of the new establishment, of the hotel and the casino. With them were also the estimates of the builders and contracts all ready to be approved and signed at the present session of

the board. The work was to begin at the opening of the next week.

The two Oriols, alone, wished to look over these papers and to discuss them. But Andermatt, quite out of patience, said: " Am I asking you for any money? No! Then leave me in peace! And if you are not satisfied, we will take another vote."

Then they signed the papers with the other members of the board and the session was over.

All the village was waiting to see them come out, so great was the excitement. The people bowed to them respectfully. As the two peasants were going home, Andermatt said to them: " Do not forget that we all dine together at the hotel. And be sure to bring your daughters—I have brought them some little gifts from Paris."

They were to meet at seven o'clock, in the reception room of the Grand Hotel.

It was a large dinner party to which the banker had invited the more prominent bathers and the village authorities. Christiane presided, the curé sitting at her right and the mayor at her left.

Nothing was talked of but the new establishment and the future prospects of the place. The two Oriol girls had found under their napkins two jewel boxes containing bracelets, set with pearls and emeralds. The girls were wild with delight and talked more brightly than they had ever done before with Gontran, who sat between them. Even the elder laughed with all her heart at the young man's jokes, for he chatted with them with great animation.

Paul ate nothing and said nothing. He felt as if his life were going to end that evening. All at once he remembered that just a month had passed, day by day, since their picnic at the lake of Tazenat.

His soul was filled with a vague pain, made up more of presentiments than regrets, presentiments known only to lovers. This is the suffering that makes the heart so heavy, the nerves so tense that the least noise harasses them, and the mind so wretchedly sad that everything we hear takes on a mournful sound corresponding with our fixed idea.

The moment that they left the table he joined Christiane in the drawing-room.

"I must see you this evening," he said, "very soon, immediately, for I do not know when we can be together alone again. Do you realize that it is just a month to-day?"

She answered:

"I know."

He continued:

"Listen, I will wait for you on the road to Roche-Pradière, near the village, under the chestnut trees. No one will notice your absence just now. Come quickly to bid me farewell, for to-morrow we part."

She whispered:

"I will be there in a quarter of an hour."

Then he went out to escape from the crowd of people which he felt he could no longer bear to be among.

He took the footpath across the vineyards that they had followed one day, the day when they had for the first time looked together at the view of Limagne. Soon he gained the highway. He was alone, and he felt himself absolutely alone, alone in all the world. The vast plain, shrouded in darkness, intensified this feeling of isolation. He paused at the very spot where they had sat, where he had recited to her the verses of Beaudelaire on Beauty. How far away that seemed, already! Then he recalled in memory everything that had happened, hour by hour, after-

wards. Never before had he been so happy, never! Never before had he loved so madly, yet so purely, so devotedly. And he thought of the evening on the lake of Tazenat, just a month ago that very day—the cool wood, flecked with pale moonlight, the little lake of silver, and the huge fish that lightly touched the surface. Then he thought of the return home, when he had seen her walking before him, through the shadows of the light, under the rays of moonlight that fell through the leaves of the trees on her hair, on her shoulders, and on her arms. Those were the sweetest moments that he had ever tasted in his life.

He turned to see if she was not coming. He did not see her, but he saw the moon that had risen above the horizon. The same moon that had risen over his first avowal, now was rising for his first farewell.

A shiver ran over him, an icy shiver. Autumn was at hand—Autumn that presages Winter. He had not felt until this moment the first touch of cold, which pierced him keenly, like a menace of misfortune.

The white, dusty road stretched out before him like a river between its steep banks. Suddenly, a figure appeared at the turn of the road. He knew her at once, and he stood waiting without moving, trembling with the mysterious happiness of feeling her draw near, of seeing her coming to him, for his sake.

She came with hesitating steps, not daring to call him, anxious at not having yet found him, for he stayed hidden under a tree, and awed by the profound silence, and by the moonlit solitude of the earth and sky. And in front of her, her shadow moved on, black and gigantic, reaching far ahead of her, and seeming to carry to him something of her.

Christiane stopped and the shadow also became motionless, lying prostrate on the road.

Paul took several quick steps up to where the head stretched itself in rounded shadows on the road. Then as though he would lose no part of her, he knelt down and prostrating himself on the ground, pressed his lips to the edge of the dark silhouette. As a thirsty dog drinks, creeping to a spring, so he began to kiss the dust, ardently, following the outlines of the beloved shadow. He crept thus towards her on his hands and knees, covering with caresses the lines of her body as if to gather up with his lips the dear, dusky image, stretched on the ground.

She was surprised and even a little frightened, and waited until he was at her feet before she gathered courage to speak to him. Then when he raised his head while he still knelt, but clasped her in his arms, she said:

"What is the matter with you this evening?"

He answered:

"Liane, I am going to lose you!"

She pushed her fingers through her lover's thick hair, and bent over him while she held back his forehead to kiss his eyes.

"Why lose me?" she said, smiling and confident.

"Because to-morrow we shall part."

"Part from one another? For such a little while, dear."

"One never knows. We shall never find again the days that we have passed here."

"We shall have others as beautiful and happy."

She raised him up and drew him under the tree where he had waited for her, and made him sit near her, lower down so that she might still caress his hair with her hand. She talked to him seriously, as a woman, who was thoughtful, ardent and determined,

who had already forseen everything, who knew by instinct what must be done, and is resolved on all.

"Listen, my darling, I am very free in Paris. William never bothers about me. His business satisfies him. Then as you are not married, I will go to see you every day, sometimes in the morning before lunch, sometimes in the afternoon, because the servants might gossip if I always went out at the same time. We can meet as often as here, even more freely, because we will have nothing to fear from inquisitive people."

But he repeated with his head bent down resting on his knees and his arm around her waist:

"Liane, Liane, I shall lose you! I feel that I shall lose you!"

She grew impatient at this unreasoning regret, of such childish regret in this powerful body, while she who was so fragile compared with him was yet so confident, so sure that nothing could part them.

He whispered:

"If you wished, Liane, we would run away together, we would go very far, to a beautiful land of flowers where we would love one another. Tell me, do you wish that we might go this evening, do you wish it?"

But she shrugged her shoulders, a little nervous, a little vexed that he had not listened to her at all, for it was no longer a time for dreams and tender weakness. Now the hour had come to show energy and prudence, and to seek a way in which they could always love one another without raising suspicion.

She replied:

"Listen, dear, we must have a good understanding together and not make any mistakes. First, are you sure of your servants? What is most to be feared is that information may be given or an anony-

mous letter may be sent to my husband. He will never suspect anything of himself. I know William well—"

The repetition of this name suddenly jarred on Paul's nerves. He said, irritably:

" Oh, don't speak to me of him to-night! "

She was astonished.

" Why? Yet we must—Oh! I assure you that he doesn't care much for me."

She had guessed his thought.

A vague jealousy that had been as yet unconscious, was wakened in him. Suddenly he knelt before her and took her hands.

" Listen, Liane!—" He was silent, hardly daring to breathe this jealous thought.

" Listen—Liane. What are your relations with him?"

She did not understand.

" Why—why—very good—"

" Yes, I know. But still—he is your husband—and—you do not know how much I have thought of that lately. How that tortures me. You understand. Tell me? "

She hesitated several seconds, then suddenly she realized his meaning, and with a burst of frank indignation, she cried:

" Oh! my dear—I am yours only—because I love you—Oh! Paul!—"

He leaned his head against her and said softly:

" But after all—my little Liane—he is your husband. Have you though of that? "

She whispered very low, too:

" Oh, but you see I have told him a secret that has made him happy. Come. Don't let's talk any more about this, you don't know how it wounds me. Trust me, for I love you—"

He did not move, and kissed her dress while she caressed his face with her light and tender touch.

But suddenly, she said:

"We must go back, or they will notice our absence."

They parted with a long embrace. Then she went back, first, running so as to reach the hotel sooner, while he watched her as she disappeared in the distance—sad as if all his happiness and all his hopes had fled with her.

PART II

CHAPTER I

THE BLESSING OF THE SPRINGS

ONE would scarcely have recognized the hot springs resort at Enval on the first of July of the succeeding year.

On the crest of the knoll between the two defiles of the valley a building rose, constructed in the Moorish style of architecture, and bore on its front façade, in letters of gold, the word, "Casino."

The little woodland, on the slope towards Limagne, had been used as the basis of a park. A terrace, flanked by a retaining wall which was ornamented from one end to the other with great vases of imitation marble, extended along in front of the building and commanded a view of Auvergne.

Lower down, among the vineyards, six châlets, here and there showed façades of polished wood.

An immense white building, on the southern slope attracted from far and wide, the attention of travellers who could see it as soon as they left Riom. This was the Grand Hotel of Mont-Oriol. And directly below it, at the very foot of the hill, a square building of simpler style, but very spacious, surrounded by a garden that was traversed by the brook that issued from the gorge, offered to the invalids the wonderful cures promised in a prospectus by Dr. Latonne. One

read on the façade, "Thermal baths of Mont-Oriol." Then, on the right wing, in smaller letters, "Hydropathy.—Stomach lavage.—Piscina with running water." And on the left wing, "Medical institute of automatic gymnastics."

Everything was white, a new, crude, shining white. Workmen were still busy; and painters, plumbers, and laborers were at work, although the establishment had now been open for a month.

But while the baths had been finished since the first days of June, the official opening of the resort had been set for the first of July, with the hope of attracting a great many people. The fête was to begin at three o'clock. It would open with the ceremony of blessing the springs. In the evening there was to be a grand entertainment, including fireworks and a ball. This would bring together all the bathers of this and the neighboring resorts, and the leading citizens of Clermont-Ferrand and Riom.

The Casino at the crest of the hill was hidden in flags. One saw only masses of blue, red, white and yellow, that formed a dense, fluttering cloud. From the tops of the tall poles placed all along the park walks, enormous oriflammes waved against the blue sky with snake-like undulations.

M. Petrus Martel, who had been appointed to the management of this new casino, imagined that he had become, under this cloud of flags, the invincible commander of some fantastic vessel, and he gave orders to the white-aproned waiters, in a resounding and terrifying voice, such as admirals must use in giving commands under fire. His ringing words, borne on the winds, were heard all the way to the village.

Andermatt, already breathless, appeared on the terrace. Petrus Martel ran to meet him, and saluted him with a grand bow and a stately gesture of his hand.

"Is everything going on all right?" asked the banker.

"Everything is all right, Monsieur le President."

"If I am needed, I can be found at the medical inspector's office. We have a meeting there this morning."

Then he went down the hill. In front of the door of the establishment the superintendent and the cashier—who had also been captured from the old Company that had now become the rival concern, but whose end was certain without any struggle being even possible—rushed forward to meet their chief. The ex-jailer made a military salute. The cashier bowed like a beggar receiving alms.

Andermatt inquired:

"Is the inspector here?"

The superintendent replied:

"Yes, Monsieur le President, all the gentlemen have come."

The banker entered the vestibule, among a crowd of women bathing attendants and respectful waiters, turned to the right and opened a door. There, in a large room, with the air of a study, full of books and busts of scientific men, he saw gathered all the members of the board of directors who were then in Enval. They were: his father-in-law, the Marquis, Gontran, his brother-in-law, the Oriols, father and son—who looked quite like gentlemen, and were dressed in such long frock coats and they themselves were so tall that they looked like advertisements of some mourning goods concern—Paul Bretigny, and Dr. Latonne.

They shook hands quickly, then took their seats and Andermatt addressed them:

"An important question remains for us to settle,

that is, naming the springs. My idea on this subject is quite different from that of the inspector. The doctor proposes to give to our three principal springs, the names of the three leaders of the medical profession who are here. It is true that this would be a delicate bit of flattery that would please them and would win them over to our side still more firmly. But, you may be sure, gentlemen, that this would alienate from us forever all their eminent colleagues who have not yet responded to our invitation, and whom we must convince of the sovereign efficacy of our springs at the cost of every effort and at every sacrifice.

" Yes, gentlemen, human nature is a fixed quantity. One must understand it and make use of it. Professors Plantureau, de Larenard and Pascalis, only to mention these three specialists in affections of the stomach and alimentary tract, will never in the world send their patients, their best and most illustrious patients, princes and archdukes, all the celebrities of the world, who are the source of both their reputations and their fortunes, to be cured at the Mas-Roussel, the Cloche, or the Remusot springs. Because these patients and the public at large would be led to suppose that these gentlemen, Professors Remusot, Cloche, and Mas-Roussel, had discovered our mineral waters and all their therapeutic properties. There is no doubt, gentlemen, that the name of Gubler with which they christened the first spring of Châtel-Guyon, for a long time prejudiced at least a number of the leading physicians against that resort, which to-day is prosperous, and prevented their patronizing it from the very first.

" I therefore propose to you that we should simply give my wife's name to the first spring that was discovered, and the names of the Mlles. Oriol to

the other two. Then we would have the Christiane, Louise and Charlotte springs. That sounds very well, it's very nice. What do you say to it? ''

His suggestion was adopted even by Dr. Latonne who added:

'' Then we might invite MM. Mas-Roussel, Cloche, and Remusot to be the godfathers and to offer their arms to the godmothers.''

'' That's perfect, perfect! '' said Andermatt. '' I will run right over to see them. They will accept. I am sure, they will accept. Then you will all be at three o'clock at the church where the procession will form.''

And he left in great haste.

The Marquis and Gontran followed him almost at once. The two Oriols, wearing tall hats, walked out in their turn, side by side, solemn and all in black on the white road. Dr. Latonne said to Paul who had just come the night before so as to be present at the fête:

'' I detained you, my dear sir, to show you something from which I expect miracles. It is my medical institute of automatic gymnastics.''

He took his arm, and led him on. But they had scarcely entered the hallway when one of the bath attendants stopped the doctor.

'' Monsieur Riquier is waiting for his lavage.''

Dr. Latonne, the year before had spoken ill of the stomach lavages that were so lauded and practised by Dr. Bonnefille in the establishment of which he was the inspectior. But time had altered his opinion and the '' Baraduc tube '' had become the great instrument of torture of the new inspector, who thrust it down everyone's throat with boyish delight.

He asked Paul Bretigny:

"Have you ever had a chance to see that little operation?"

The other replied:

"No, never."

"Come and see it then, my dear fellow, it is very curious."

They went into the shower bath room where M. Riquier, the man with the brick-red complexion, was waiting sitting on a wooden armchair. He was trying the effects this year of the newly discovered springs, as he had tried every summer those of all the new resorts.

Like some criminal of ancient times awaiting execution, he was swathed and half strangled in a sort of a straight waistcoat of oil-cloth that was designed to preserve his clothing from spots and spatters. He wore the wretched, anxious, pained expression of patients on whom a surgeon is going to operate.

The moment that the doctor appeared, the attendant seized a long tube, divided into three near the middle, and thus which resembling a thin double-tailed snake. Then the man attached one of these ends to a little faucet that was connected with the spring. The second end was left hanging in a glass receptacle into which the rejected contents of the stomach should later flow. Then the inspector took with a firm hand the third branch of the tube, and approached M. Riquier with a pleasant air. He passed the tube into the patient's mouth, and directing it skillfully, slid it down his throat, forcing it down deeper and deeper with his thumb and first finger, with a gracious and benevolent air, repeating meanwhile: "Very good, very good, very good. That will do, that will do, that will do, that will do perfectly."

M. Riquier, with his eyes staring wildly, his cheeks purple, his lips covered with foam, gasped, choked, and gave agonized hiccoughs. Then, bound as he was to the arms of the chair, he made desperate efforts to reject the beastly rubber tube that was penetrating into his body.

When he had swallowed about half a meter, the doctor said:

"We are at the bottom. Turn on the faucet."

The attendant turned on the water, and soon the invalid's stomach began to swell visibly, as it was gradually filled with the tepid water from the spring.

"Cough," said the doctor, "cough to aid the descent of the water."

Instead of coughing, the poor wretch had a rattling in his throat, and shaken with convulsions, he looked as if his eyes would pop out of his head. Then suddenly a slight gurgling was heard on the floor near his armchair. The siphon of the triple tube had begun to act, and the stomach was now emptied into the glass vessel, in which the doctor searched with interest for indications of catarrh and for traces of of imperfect digestion.

"You must never eat any more peas, or salad! Oh! no salad! You don't digest it at all. No strawberries, either! I have already told you ten times, no strawberries!"

M. Riquier seemed to be furiously angry. He worked himself up into a state of excitement without being able to speak with the tube gagging him. But when the lavage was over, and the doctor has skillfully drawn out this plummet from his insides, he exclaimed:

"Is it my fault if I eat salads every day that destroy my health? Isn't it your duty to supervise the menus of your hotel manager? I came to your

new miserable eating place because they were poisoning me with abominable food at the old one, but on my word! I am worse off in your great barracks of an inn at Mont-Oriol.''

The doctor had to calm him, and promised over and over again that he would take the invalid's table under his supervision.

Then he took Paul Bretigny's arm once more, and led him on. He said:

'' These are the very rational principles on which my special treatment of automatic gymnastics that we are going to inspect, is based. You are familiar with my system of organometric medicine, are you not? I hold that a great many of our diseases arise simply from the excessive development of one organ that impinges on the neighboring organ, so as to hinder its functions, and thus destroys the general harmony of the body which is the source of most serious disorders.

'' Now, exercise, combined with shower baths and thermal treatment, is the most vigorous method of re-establishing this equilibrium, and of reducing the encroaching parts to their normal condition.

'' But how are we to persuade people to exercise? There is not only a considerable physical exertion in walking, or riding, or swimming, or rowing, but there is also a still greater moral effort. It is the mind that decides, carries on, and sustains the actions of the body. Men of energy are men of action! Now energy is in the spirit and not in the muscles. The body obeys the active will.

'' Now we cannot even dream of giving courage to the cowardly nor determination to the weak. But we can do something else, we can do more, we can take out of consideration courage, mental energy,

and moral effort, and yet obtain the physical movements. I advantageously substitute for the moral effort, a foreign and purely mechanical force. Do you understand? No, not very clearly. Let us go in and see."

He opened a door that lead into a long hall in which were rows of strange looking instruments. There were great armchairs with artificial wooden legs, horses made of rough pine wood, jointed boards, movable bars stretched in front of chairs that were fastened to the floor. And all these objects were connected with complicated machinery that was set in motion by winches.

The doctor resumed:

"We have four principal forms of exercise that I will call the natural exercises. They are walking, riding, swimming and rowing. Each of these exercises develops different parts and has a particular effect. Now we have all four here, artificially produced. One has simply to relax, and without thinking about it, one can run, ride, swim, or row, for an hour, without the mind's taking the slightest part in this purely muscular work."

At that moment, M. Aubry-Pasteur came in, followed by a man whose sleeves were rolled up and showed the strong biceps muscles of his arms. The engineer had grown still fatter. He walked with his arms and legs spread wide from his body, and panted.

The doctor said:

" You will learn by watching."

And turning to his patient, he said:

" Well, my dear sir, what shall we do to-day? Shall it be walking or riding? "

M. Aubry-Pasteur, who shook hands with Paul, replied:

"I will walk a little seated, that fatigues me less."

M. Latonne resumed:

"We have, indeed, both walking seated, and walking standing. Walking standing while more efficacious, is rather trying. I effect it by means of pedals on which you stand and which keep the limbs in motion while you keep upright by grasping rings secured to the wall. But this is the method of walking seated."

The engineer had sank down in a rocking chair. He placed his legs in the movable, wooden, jointed legs that were attached to the chair. His legs and ankles were strapped so that he could not make any voluntary movement. Then the man with his sleeves rolled up, grasped the crank and turned it with all his strength. The armchair first rocked like a hammock, then the legs started up, stretching out and bending back, going and coming with great speed.

"He is running," said the doctor, who gave the order. "Gently, go at a walk."

The attendant slackened the speed, and made the fat engineer go at a more moderate sitting walk, which distorted the movements of his body in a ludicrous way.

Two other invalids then came in, both of them enormous. They were also followed by bare-armed attendants.

They hoisted them up on the wooden horses. These were set in motion and at once began to gallop where they stood, and shook up their cavaliers in a frightful manner.

"Gallop!" shouted the doctor. And the make believe animals, leaping up like waves and capsizing like ships, so exhausted the two patients that they

began to cry out, both together, in gasping and pitiful voices: "Enough! Enough! I can't stand any more! Enough!"

The doctor ordered: "Stop! Then he added:

"Get your breath a little. You will begin again in five minutes."

Paul Bretigny, who was bursting with a desire to laugh, remarked that the riders weren't warm at all, while the men who turned the winches were perspiring.

"Wouldn't it be better if you exchanged the roles?"

The doctor answered, gravely:

"Oh, not at all, my dear sir! You must not confound exercise with fatigue. The motion of the man who turns the crank is not beneficial, while the motion of the one who is walking or riding is excellent."

But Paul saw a woman's saddle.

"Yes," said the doctor, "the afternoon is reserved for the ladies. Gentlemen are not admitted after twelve. Now come and watch the dry swimming."

A system of movable boards, screwed together at their ends and centers, which could be stretched out in lozenge form or closed up into squares—like the children's game that carries soldiers who are spurred along—was so arranged that three swimmers could be simultaneously garroted and quartered.

The doctor said:

"I do not need to laud to you the advantages of dry swimming that does not moisten the body, except with perspiration, and consequently does not expose our hypothetical bather to any chance of rheumatism."

But an attendant came to find him, with a card in his hand.

"The Duke of Ramas, my dear fellow, I must leave you. Excuse me."

Paul, left alone, looked around him. The two riders were trotting again. M. Aubry-Pasteur was still walking, and the three attendants, who were from Auvergne, were panting, with their arms and backs nearly broken from shaking up the patients. They looked as if they were grinding coffee.

When he went out of doors, Bretigny saw Dr. Honorat and his wife, looking at the preparations for the celebration. They began to chat together, gazing up at the flags that made a halo around the hill.

"Does the procession form at the church," asked the doctor's wife.

"Yes, at the church."

"At three o'clock?"

"At three o'clock."

"The professors will be there?"

"Yes, they will escort the ladies who will christen the springs.

Then the Paille ladies stopped him. And after that the Monecus, father and daughter. But as he was to lunch tête-à-tête with his friend Gontran, at the Casino café, he walked slowly in that direction. Paul, who had come the night before, had not seen his chum for a confidential chat for a month, and he had lots of stories of the boulevards, stories of girls and gaming-houses.

They had stayed on gossiping until half-past two, when Petrus Martel warned them that it was time for them to go to the church.

"Let's go and find Christiane," said Gontran.

"Yes, let's go," said Paul.

They found her standing on the steps of the new hotel. Her hollow cheeks, sallow complexion, and figure betrayed her condition.

"I was waiting for you," she said. "William has gone on ahead. He had so many things to attend to to-day."

She raised her eyes to Paul Bretigny with a look full of tenderness, and took his arm.

They started quietly along on their way, avoiding the stones. She said:

"Oh, how badly I feel! How badly I feel! I dread to walk, I am so afraid of falling."

He did not reply, and supported her carefully, without meeting her eyes that she turned constantly to him.

A dense crowd was waiting in front of the church.

Andermatt cried: "At last you've come. Hurry up! See, this is the order of the procession: two choir boys, two precentors in surplices, the cross, holy water, the priest, then Christiane with Professor Cloche, Mlle. Louise with Professor Remusot, and Mlle. Charlotte with Professor Mas-Roussel. Immediately after them come the board of directors, the medical staff, then the public. It's understood. Forward!"

The religious members of the procession then came out from the church and took their places at the head. Then a tall gentleman, with long white hair hanging down below his ears, a typical *savant,* after the academic style, approached Madame Andermatt with a deep bow.

When he had straightened up, he started off in the procession beside her, with his head bare and holding his hat in his hand, so as to show his fine scientific locks of hair. His gait was very imposing, as if he had learned it at the Comédie-Française, and

he wished to display before the crowd his decoration of an officer of the Legion of Honor, which was too big for a modest man.

He said:

"Your husband, Madame, was just talking to me about your condition which gives him some anxiety. He has told me your doubts and feelings of uncertainty."

She blushed to her temples.

A voice behind them said:

"This resort has a great future. I have already obtained surprising results."

It was Professor Remusot talking to his companion, Louise Oriol. He was a little man, that one, with yellow unkempt hair, a badly cut frock coat, and the dirty look of a slovenly scientist.

Professor Mas-Roussel, who offered his arm to Charlotte Oriol, was a fine-looking doctor, smooth-shaven, smiling, well-kept, hardly gray at all, a trifle stout, whose shaven face did not look like that of a priest or of an actor, as did Dr. Latonne's.

The board of directors followed immediately behind, led by Andermatt, and towered over by the huge hats of the two Oriols.

Behind them was still another group of silk hats, the medical staff of Enval, from among whom Dr. Bonnefille was missing. His place was taken by two new doctors, Dr. Black, an old man who was very short, almost a dwarf, whose excessive piety had surprised the whole place, from the very day of his arrival, and a very handsome young man, a great flirt, who wore a little cap. He was Dr. Mazelli, an Italian attaché of the staff of the Duke of Ramas, or, as others said, of the staff of the Duchess.

And behind them came the public, a great crowd of people, of bathers, peasants, and citizens of neighboring towns.

The blessing of the springs was a very short ceremony. Abbé Litre sprinkled them, one after another, with holy water, which made Dr. Honorat remark that he would give them new properties with chloride of sodium. Then all the special guests entered the large reading-room where a collation was served.

Paul said to Gontran:

"How pretty the little Oriol girls have grown!"

"They are charming, my dear fellow."

"Have you seen Monsieur le President," the ex-jailer suddenly asked the young men.

"Yes, he is in the corner over there."

"Père Clovis is gathering a crowd in front of the door."

The whole procession on the way to the blessing of the springs, had already filed past the old invalid, who had been cured the year before and had now returned more paralyzed than ever. He stopped the strangers on the roads and the last-comers by preference to tell them his story.

"Let me tell you, that water is no good. It cures you, that's true, but you relapse and after the relapse you're half-dead. Now, I had legs that could walk a little, but now, see how I am losing the use of my arms as a result of the cure. And my legs are iron, but iron that must be cut before it will bend."

Andermatt, in despair, had tried to have him put in jail on the charge of malicious injury to the waters of Mont Oriol, and for attempts at extortion. But he had been unable to obtain a conviction, nor to stop the old rascal's talk.

As soon as he heard that he was tattling at the door of the establishment, he rushed out to make him keep still.

He heard two angry voices, in the middle of a

crowd, on the edge of the main road. Everyone was pressing forward to hear and to see. The ladies asked: "What is it?" The men answered: "It's a sick man that the waters here have finished." Others thought that a child had been crushed to death. It was also rumored that a poor woman had fallen in an attack of apoplexy.

Andermatt burst through the crowd, as he knew how to do, by pushing his little round stomach among the other people. "It proves," said Gontran, "the advantage of balls over points."

Père Clovis sitting on the curbstone, whined out his sufferings, and sniveled, while the two Oriols stood between him and the crowd. Father and son were exasperated and insulted and threatened him at the tops of their voices.

"It's not true," cried Colosse, "he's a liar, a fake, a poacher who hunts all night through the woods."

But the old rascal, without being disturbed in the least, kept repeating in a high piercing voice that could be heard above the vociferations of the two men:

"They have killed me, my good sirs, they have killed me with their spring. They bathed me in it by force last year. And look at me now, this moment, look at me now, look at me now!"

Andermatt imposed silence on everyone, then bending down over the helpless man, and looking into the depths of his eyes, said:

"If you are worse, it is your own fault, do you understand that? But if you listen to me, I will promise to cure you in fifteen or twenty baths at most. Come and see me an hour from now at the establishment, when everyone will have gone, and we will arrange that, my uncle. And meantime, hold your tongue."

The old rascal understood. He was silent, then after a pause, he said:

"I am always ready to give it a trial. You'll see."

Andermatt took the Oriols by the arms and led them quickly away. Père Clovis lay stretched out on the grass, with his crutches beside him, on the roadside, and blinked in the sunshine.

The curious crowd pressed around him. Gentlemen asked him questions, but he no longer answered, and acted as if he had not heard or did not understand. Then all this curiosity, which he could no longer turn to account, ended by boring him, and he began to sing, bare-headed, in a voice as much out of tune as it was harsh—an interminable song in unintelligible patois.

And the crowd gradually dispersed. Only a few children stayed a long time watching him, with their fingers on their noses.

Christiane, who was very tired, had gone back to rest. Paul and Gontran walked in the new park among the visitors. All at once they saw the group of actors that had also deserted from the old casino to join the growing fortunes of the new.

Mlle. Odelin, who had become very fashionable, was walking arm in arm with her mother, who had assumed an air of importance. M. Petit-Nivelle of the Vaudeville seemed very attentive to these ladies. Behind them was M. Lapalme of the Grand Theater of Bordeaux, who was arguing with the old staff of musicians, the *maëstro* Saint-Landri, the pianist Javel, the flutist Noirot, and the double-bass Nicordi.

When he saw Paul and Gontran, Saint-Landri rushed to them. During the winter he had had a little operetta played in a small, out-of-the-way theater, but the newspapers had reviewed it rather

favorably, and now he treated MM. Massenet, Reyer, and Gounod scornfully.

He stretched out both hands in friendly greeting, and then began to repeat his discussion with the members of the orchestra that he conducted.

" Yes, my dear sir, it's all finished, finished, finished, with the old school and their threadbare repetitions. The melodists have had their day. This is what people don't want to believe.

" Music is a new art. Melody is only its first lisping. The uncultivated ear has always loved refrains, and takes in them the delight of a child, the pleasure of a savage. I may add that the ears of the people, or of the unsophisticated public will always love simple songs, that is melodies. It is an amusement similar to that of the habitués of café concerts.

" I will use a comparison to make my meaning clear. The eye of the rustic loves crude colors and striking pictures. The eye of the educated, middle-class citizen, who, however, is not an artist, delights in shades that are harmoniously bright and in sentimental subjects. But the eye of the artist, the trained eye, loves, appreciates and distinguishes, the almost imperceptible modulations of the same tone, the mysterious harmony of shades that are invisible to all the rest of the world.

"It's the same in literature. Janitors enjoy tales of adventure, ordinary people like novels that stir their emotions, while the true men of letters care only for the artistic books which are incomprehensible to others.

" When a middle-class citizen speaks to me of music, I feel like killing him. And when we are at the opera, I ask: ' Can you tell me whether the third violin played a false note in the overture of the third

act?' 'No.' 'Then keep still. You have no ear.' The man who cannot listen to the music of an orchestra as a whole and yet, at the same time, distinguish the separate instruments has no ear, and is not a musician. So there you are! Good-night!"

He turned on his heel, then resumed: "To an artist all the power of music lies in a single chord. Ah, my dear friends, some chords madden me, they make a flood of indescribable happiness rush over me. My ear now is so well-trained, so finished, so matured, that I end by liking even certain false chords, like a virtuoso whose over-cultivated taste sinks into depravity. I am commencing to be a degenerate seeking the most extreme sensations of hearing. Yes, my friends, certain discords! What delights they give! What perverted and profound delights! How that moves me, how it vibrates on the nerves, how it grates on the ear—how it grates! —how it grates!"

He rubbed his hands with rapture, and he chanted: "You shall hear my opera—my opera—my opera. You shall hear my opera."

Gontran asked:

"Are you composing an opera?"

"Yes, I have finished it."

But the voice of Petrus Martel resounded in command:

"You understand perfectly! It's agreed on—a yellow rocket and off you go!"

He was giving directions about the fireworks. They joined him, and he explained about his arrangements, showing with outstretched arm, as if he were defying a fleet of the enemy, the white stakes on the mountain, above the gorge, on the opposite side of the valley.

"It is from there that they will be set off. I will

direct the man who is to attend to it, to be at his post not later than half-past nine. As soon as the entertainment is over, I will give the signal from here by a yellow rocket, and then he will set off the first piece."

The Marquis appeared.

"I am going to drink a glass of water," said he.

Paul and Gontran went with him, and again descended the hill. When they arrived at the establishment, they saw Père Clovis going in, supported by the two Oriols. He was followed by Andermatt and the doctor, and every time he dragged his legs along the floor, he made fearful contortions of pain.

"Let us go in," said Gontran, "this will be fun."

They seated the paralytic in a chair, then Andermatt said to him:

"This is my proposition, you old swindler. You are to be cured immediately by taking two baths a day. And you shall have two hundred francs as soon as you walk——"

The paralytic began to groan.

"My legs, they are iron, my good Monchieu."

Andermatt made him hold his tongue, then continued:

"Listen to me now. And you will have two hundred francs more every year until your death—you understand?—until your death, if you continue to experience good results from our springs."

The old man was perplexed. A permanent cure upset all his plans of life.

He asked, hesitatingly:

"But when—when it's closed—your box here—if this takes me again—I can do nothing—alone—seeing that it's closed—your springs——"

Dr. Latonne interrupted him, and turning towards Andermatt, he exclaimed:

" Splendid—splendid. We will cure him every year—that's better still and will prove the need of annual treatment, that it's indispensable to return. That's perfect! It's agreed! "

But the old fellow objected again:

" It won't be so easy this time, my good sirs. My legs are iron, bars of iron——"

The doctor hatched up a new idea.

" If I should have you take several treatments of walking seated," he said, " I would hasten greatly the effect of the water. It's a chance to experiment."

" A happy thought," said Andermatt, who then added: " Now, Père Clovis, off you go, and do not forget our agreement."

The old rascal went off, always groaning. Then, as evening was drawing near, all the Mont-Oriol directors went into dinner, for the theatrical entertainment was scheduled to take place at half-past seven.

It was held in the large hall of the new Casino, which could seat a thousand people.

From seven o'clock on the members of the audience who had not reserved seats began to arrive.

At half-past seven the hall was filled, and the curtain rose on a farce of two acts. This preceded Saint-Landri's operetta, and was performed by vocalists from Vichy who were borrowed for this occasion.

Christiane, who sat on the front row between her husband and her brother, suffered greatly with the heat.

She said every few moments:

" I can't stand it any longer! I can't stand it any longer! "

After the farce, when the operetta was commencing, she feared she would be ill, and turning to her husband she said:

"Dear Will, I must go out. I am suffocating!"

The banker was vexed. He wanted, above all, that the fête should be a success from beginning to end, without anything to mar it. He replied:

"Make every effort, I beg you, to throw it off; your leaving would upset everything. You would have to pass through the whole hall."

But Gontran, who was seated behind her, with Paul, overheard this.

"You are too warm?" he said.

"Yes, I am suffocating."

"All right. Wait. You will have something to laugh at."

A window stood near. He slid along, stepped up on a chair and sprang out, scarcely attracting any attention.

Then he went into the café, which was quite empty, and stretched his hand under the bar where he had seen Petrus Martel hide the signal rocket, and stole it. Then he ran and concealed himself in a clump of trees, and lighted it.

The swift yellow sheath flew upward towards the clouds in a curve, and threw across the sky a long shower of drops of flame.

Almost immediately a loud explosion broke out on the opposite mountain and a cluster of stars was scattered out into the darkness of night.

Someone shouted in the auditorium, where the chords of Saint-Landri were quivering: "They are setting off the fireworks!"

The spectators who were nearest to the doors rose quickly to make sure and stole out softly. All the rest turned to look out the windows, but they

could see nothing, for they were looking towards Limagne.

People asked: "Is it true? Is it true?"

The impatient crowd grew excited, eager to see the fireworks.

A voice outside shouted: "It's true, they are setting them off."

Then in a second the whole audience rose. They rushed to the doors, they jostled one another, they shouted to those who obstructed the exit: "Hurry up, hurry up!"

Soon everyone was out in the park. Saint-Landri, alone, filled with rage, kept beating time in front of his distracted orchestra, while over on the other hill brilliant lights succeeded Roman candles, with intermingled explosions.

Suddenly an awe-inspiring voice hurled out three times this furious cry: "Stop, *nom de Dieu!* Stop, *nom de Dieu!* Stop, *nom de Dieu!*"

And as an immense Bengal light was then set off on the mountain, and illumined with a red glow the great boulders and trees to the right, and with a blue sheen those to the left, one beheld Petrus Martel, standing on one of the vases of imitation marble that ornamented the Casino terrace, frantic, bareheaded, his arms raised in the air, gesticulating and yelling.

At this moment the great illumination was extinguished—one saw only the true stars. But directly another piece was set off, and Petrus Martel, leaping to the ground, cried: "What a disaster! what a disaster! *Mon Dieu,* what a disaster!"

And he rushed through the crowd with tragic gestures, shaking his fists in the air, stamping with rage, and crying out: "What a disaster! *Mon Dieu,* what a disaster!"

Christiane had taken Paul's arm to take a seat in the open air, and she watched with delight the rockets flying up to the sky.

Her brother suddenly joined them and said: "Well, did it succeed? Do you think it is funny?"

She murmured:

"What, was it you?"

"Why, yes, it was I. Was it a good joke?"

She began to laugh, thinking it, indeed, very amusing. But Andermatt came up, heart-broken. He could not understand how such a mistake had happened. Some one had stolen the rocket from under the bar and given the signal. Such an infamous action could have been perpetrated only by an emissary of the old Company, by an agent of Doctor Bonnefille's.

"It's distressing, perfectly distressing. Here is a complete loss of fireworks worth two thousand three hundred francs!"

Gontran answered:

"No, my dear fellow, to be exact, the loss is not more than a quarter, or a third, if you like—call it seven hundred and sixty-six francs. Your guests will still enjoy fifteen hundred and thirty-four francs' worth of rockets. Really, that's not bad."

The banker's anger was turned upon his brother-in-law. He took his arm roughly.

"As far as you are concerned, I must speak seriously to you. Now that I've got you, we will take a stroll down the park paths. Besides, I've got five minutes."

Then, turning to Christiane, he said:

"My dear, I will leave you in the care of our friend, Bretigny. But take care of yourself. Don't stay out of doors long. You might catch cold, you know. Be careful, be careful!"

She murmured:

" Don't be anxious, dear."

And Andermatt led Gontran away.

As soon as they were alone, at a little distance from the crowd, the banker stopped.

" My dear fellow, I want to speak to you about your financial position."

" About my financial position? "

" Yes, you know all about it, your financial position."

" No, but you ought to know about it for me, because you lend me money."

" Indeed, yes, I do know about it very well, and that's why I am talking to you about it."

" It seems to me at least that the time is not well chosen—in the midst of fireworks! "

" On the contrary, the time is well chosen. I am not talking to you in the midst of the fireworks, but just before the ball——"

" Before the ball? I don't understand."

" Well, you will understand. This is your position. You have nothing but debts, and you never will have anything but debts——"

Gontran answered with a serious air:

" You tell me that rather harshly."

" Yes, because I have to. Listen to me. You have squandered your share of your mother's fortune. We need say no more about that."

" We need say no more."

" As regards your father, he has an income of thirty thousand francs, call it a capital of about eight hundred thousand francs. Your share would then ultimately be four hundred thousand francs. But you owe to me alone a hundred and ninety thousand francs. And, besides, you owe money to usurers."

Gontran muttered haughtily:

"Why don't you say to Jews?"

"Very well, to Jews, although there is among the number a churchwarden of Saint-Sulpice who served as intermediary for a priest in the transaction—but I won't quibble about such trifles. The fact is, you owe various usurers, Jews or Catholics, about the same amount. Let us call it one hundred and fifty thousand, at the lowest figure. That makes a total of three hundred and forty thousand francs, on which you pay interest by making new loans, except mine, on which you do not pay."

"That's correct," said Gontran.

"Then you have nothing left at all."

"Nothing at all—except my brother-in-law."

"Except your brother-in-law, who has had enough of lending money to you."

"And so?"

"And so, my dear boy, the poorest peasant, living in one of these huts, is richer than you."

"Perfectly true—and further?"

"Further—further—if your father should die to-morrow, there would be no other way for you to get bread, to get bread, you understand, than to accept a position as clerk in my business house. And that would still be only a way of disguising the pension that I would give you."

Gontran said, in an irritated tone:

"My dear William, these matters annoy me. I know them as well as you, and I repeat that the time is ill-chosen to remind me of them with—with—with so little diplomacy."

"Excuse me, allow me to finish. You can only get yourself out of this by a marriage. But you are a poor match in spite of your name that sounds well, without being illustrious. At least it is not one of those for which an heiress, even a Jewish heiress,

will pay a fortune. So you must find a woman who is acceptable and rich, which is not so easy."

Gontran interrupted: "Name her at once, that would be better."

"Very well, one of the daughters of Père Oriol, whichever you choose. And that is why I am talking to you about this before the ball."

"And now explain to me more at length," said Gontran coldly.

"It's very easy. You see the success that I have had at the first stroke with this resort. Then, if I had in my hands, or rather if you had in yours, all these lands held by this sly fox of a peasant, I would make money out of it. To mention only the vineyards that lie between the establishment and the hotel and between the hotel and the casino, I would give a million francs for them to-morrow, I, Andermatt. Then these vineyards and the other lands all around the knoll will be the girls' dowries. The father told me again recently, perhaps not without intention. Well—if you like, we could make a mint of money there together."

Gontran muttered, seeming to consider:

"It's possible. I'll think of it."

"Think of it, my dear boy, and do not forget that I never advise anything except what is very safe, after I have thought a great deal about it, and when I know all the possible results, and all the certain advantages."

But Gontran raised his arm, and exclaimed, as if he had suddenly forgotten all that his brother-in-law had told him:

"Look! How beautiful it is!"

A set piece flamed up in the form of a burning palace from which a blazing flag floated, bearing "Mont-Oriol" in letters of fire, and opposite, above

the plain, the moon, red also, seemed to have risen so as to look down at this spectacle. Then, when the palace had burned for several minutes, it exploded like a ship blowing up, scattering into the sky fantastic stars, which in their turn burst, and the moon remained alone, calm and round on the horizon.

The crowd applauded wildly, shouting: "Hurrah! Bravo! Bravo!"

Suddenly Andermatt said:

"We must go and open the ball, my dear fellow. Will you dance the first quadrille vis-à-vis to me?"

"Yes, with pleasure, my dear brother-in-law."

"Whom are you going to ask to dance with you? I am engaged to dance with the Duchess of Ramas."

Gontran answered carelessly:

"I shall ask Charlotte Oriol."

They went again up the knoll. When they passed by the place where Christine had stayed with Paul Bretigny, they did not see them any longer.

William said:

"She listened to my advice, she has gone to lie down. She was very tired to-day."

And he walked on towards the ballroom that the servants had arranged during the fireworks.

But Christiane had not gone to her room at all, as her husband thought.

The moment that she felt that she was alone with Paul, she pressed his hand and said in a low voice:

"At last you have come. I have waited for you for a month. Every morning I wondered: 'Shall I see him to-day?' And every evening I said to myself: 'Will it be to-morrow?' Why have you delayed so long, my love?"

He answered with embarrassment:

"I have had business matters to attend to."

She leaned against him, murmuring:

"It wasn't kind to leave me here alone with them, especially as I am not well."

He moved his chair a little way.

"Be careful, people might see us. These rockets light up the whole place."

She did not think about it at all. She said:

"I love you so much!"

Then, trembling with joy, she said:

"Oh! how happy I am, how happy I am that we are here again together! Are you thinking of it? What joy, Paul! How much we shall love one another again!" She sighed in a voice so faint that it seemed a mere breath:

"I have a foolish longing to caress you, but it is foolish. I have not seen you for so long!"

Then suddenly, with the wild energy of a passionate woman, to whom everything must yield, she said:

"Listen, I want—you understand—I want to go with you right away to the place where we said good-by, last year! You remember it well, don't you, on the road to Roche-Pradière?"

He replied, with astonishment:

"But that is crazy, you can't walk there. You have been standing all day long. It's crazy, I won't permit it."

She rose, and repeated:

"I wish it. If you will not go with me, I will go alone."

And pointing to the rising moon, she said:

"Look, it's a night just like the other! Do you remember how you kissed my shadow?"

He held her back.

"Christiane—listen—it's absurd, Christiane!"

She did not reply and walked towards the slope

that led to the vineyards. He knew that calm determination that nothing could divert, the quiet obstinacy of those blue eyes, of that little forehead of the fair woman that no obstacle could daunt; and he took her arm to support her on the way.

"What if people should see us, Christiane?"

"You did not say that last year. And, besides, everyone is at the fête. We will be back before our absence has been noticed."

They had soon to climb up the stony footpath. She panted, and leaned her whole weight on him, while at every step she said:

"It's good, it's good, it's good to suffer so!"

He stopped and wanted to take her back. But she would not listen.

"No, no, I am happy. You do not understand."

She did not realize that this man was one of the race of lovers, and not of the race of fathers. Since he had discovered her condition, he kept away from her, and was disgusted with her in spite of himself. He had often said in past days that a woman who has performed the function of reproduction is no longer worthy of love. What raised him to an exalted tenderness was the soaring of two hearts towards an inaccessible ideal, the twining together of two souls which are immaterial, all that is fanciful and unattainable that poets have ascribed to the passion. In the physical woman, he adored the Venus whose sacred side should always preserve the pure form of sterility. Maternity had changed this woman. She was no longer a wonderful being to be worshipped and dreamed of. And even a material disgust was mingled with this mental repugnance.

How could she have felt or divined this, she, whom the child she yearned for drew her still more closely to her lover? The man whom she wor-

shipped, whom she had loved more and more, every day, since the moment of their first kiss. And she loved him doubly now because of this new bond.

They had reached the road.

"It was there that you waited for me that evening," she said.

And she raised her lips. He kissed them without speaking, with a cold kiss.

She murmured for the second time:

"Do you remember how you kissed my shadow on the ground? We were standing just like this, see?"

And in the hope that he would do it over again, she ran away a little distance from him. Then she paused, panting, and waited, standing in the middle of the road. But the moon that lengthened out her profile, betrayed her changed form. And Paul, seeing this shadow at his feet, stood unmoved before it. His poetic sense was wounded. He was vexed that she did not feel this herself, that she did not divine his thoughts, that she had not enough coquetry, tact, and feminine delicacy to appreciate all the shades that give such a different color to events. He said to her with a touch of impatience in his voice:

"See here, Christiane, this child's play is ridiculous."

She came back to him, hurt, sad, with outstretched arms, and threw herself on his breast, crying:

"Oh! you love me less. I feel it! I am sure of it!"

He had pity on her, and took her head in his hands and pressed two long kisses on her eyes.

Then they went back in silence. He could think of nothing to say to her, and as she leaned against

him, overcome with fatigue, he hastened his steps that he might no longer feel the touch of her figure.

When they approached the hotel, they separated, and she went up to her room.

The casino orchestra was playing dance music, and Paul went to see the ball. It was a waltz, and everyone was dancing. Dr. Latonne was waltzing with Madame Paille, the younger, Andermatt with Louise Oriol, the handsome Doctor Mazelli with the Duchess of Ranas, and Gontran with Charlotte Oriol. He was whispering in her ear in that tender way that shows a courtship is commenced; and she, smiling and blushing behind her fan, seemed highly delighted.

Paul heard a voice behind him say:

" Look, look, M. de Ravenel is whispering pretty nothings to my patient."

It was Dr. Honorat, who was standing by the door and amusing himself by watching them. He continued:

" Yes, yes, that has been going on now for half an hour. Everyone has noticed it. It doesn't look as if it displeased the little girl."

He added after a pause:

" And she is a pearl, that young girl, good, gay, simple-hearted, devoted, true, a fine nature, you know. She is worth ten of the older sister. You know, I have known them from childhood—these young girls—and yet their father prefers the elder because she is more—more—like him—more of a peasant—less generous—more economical—sharper—and more jealous. Oh! she is a good girl all the same—I did not want to say anything against her—but in spite of myself I compare them, you understand—and after comparing them—I judge them—that is all."

The waltz ended. Gontran rejoined his friend, and when he saw the doctor, he said:

"Ah! tell me now, the medical staff of Enval seems to have grown wonderfully. We have a M. Mazelli who dances to perfection, and a little old M. Black who seems to stand in well with Heaven."

But Dr. Honorat was very discreet. He did not enjoy gossiping about his colleagues.

CHAPTER II

GONTRAN'S CHOICE

THE subject of the doctors had now become the burning question at Enval. They had suddenly taken the place by storm, engrossed all the attention, and all the interest of the people. In past times, the springs flowed under the sole authority of Dr. Bonnefille, in the midst of the harmless animosities of restless Dr. Latonne and placid Dr. Honorat.

It was a very different matter now.

The moment that the success planned by Andermatt during the winter had been realized, thanks to the able co-operation of Professors Cloche, Mas-Roussel, and Remusot, who had each brought a following of at least two to three hundred invalids, Dr. Latonne, inspector of the new establishment, had become an important personage. He was especially patronized by Professor Mas-Roussel, whose student he had been, and whose bearing he imitated.

Dr. Bonnefille was quite out of the question. He railed furiously against Mont-Oriol, and the old doctor stayed all day long in the old establishment.

For some patients really believed that he alone knew the true properties of the springs, that he held, so to speak, their secret, because he had officially administered them since the founding of the resort.

Dr. Honorat was barely able even to keep his practice among the natives of Auvergne. He was contented with this modest income and lived on good terms with everyone, and consoled himself by much preferring cards and white wine to medicine.

But he did not go to the extreme of loving his fellow physicians.

Dr. Latonne would thus have continued to be the great seer of Mont-Oriol, if one morning there had not appeared a very short man, almost a dwarf, whose great head sunk between his shoulders, big round eyes, and huge hands, all together made a strange-looking being. This new doctor, M. Black, had been brought to the place by Professor Remusot, and had at once drawn attention to himself by his excessive piety.

Almost every morning, between two calls, he went for a few minutes to church, and nearly every Sunday he received communion. The curé soon got some patients for him, old maids, charity patients, pious ladies who first asked the advice of their pastor, before calling in a man of science whose sentiments, reserve and professional modesty they wished to be assured of before everything else.

Then one day the arrival of the Princess Maldebourg was heralded. She was of the old German nobility, a fervent Catholic, who the very evening of her arrival called Dr. Black, on the recommendation of a cardinal of the Church of Rome.

From that moment, he was the fashion. It was good taste, good form, and very stylish to be under his care. He was the only doctor of real refinement, so they said, the only one in whom a woman could have implicit confidence.

So he was to be seen, rushing from one hotel to another, from morning till evening—this little man

with a bulldog head, who always spoke in a low voice in corners, confidentially, with everyone. He seemed always to have important secrets to confide or to receive, for one met him often in the halls in most mysterious conferences with the hotel guests, with the maids of his patients and with anyone else who was associated with his patients.

When he was on the street, as soon as he saw a lady of his acquaintance, he went straight to her with his short, quick step, and began at once to mumble new and minute directions, like a priest at confession.

The old women especially worshipped him. He listened to their stories to the end without interrupting them, and made notes on what they said, and of all their questions, and their wishes.

He increased or diminished, every day, the amount of water his patients were to drink, which inspired them with great confidence in his care of them.

"We stopped yesterday at three glasses and three-quarters," he would say, "very well! To-day we will take only two glasses and a half, and to-morrow three glasses. Do not forget—to-morrow, three glasses—I am very particular about it, very!"

And these patients were convinced that he was, indeed, very particular about it. That he might not forget all these figures and fractions, he wrote them in a note-book, so that he would never make a mistake. For a patient will not forgive an error of half a glass.

He ordered and modified with the same exactness the length of the daily baths in virtue of principles known to himself alone. Dr. Latonne, jealous and exasperated, shrugged his shoulders, and said: "He is a fraud." His hatred of Dr. Black even led him

at times to deprecate the mineral waters: "Since we hardly know their action, it is clearly impossible to prescribe every day changes in the dose, which can be governed by no therapeutic law. Such proceedings as these do the very greatest injury to the practice of medicine."

Dr. Honorat contented himself with smiling. He always took pains to forget the number of glasses that he had ordered, five minutes after a consultation.

"The difference of two, more or less," he said to Gontran in moments of merriment, "will affect only the spring, and that won't trouble it any!" The only malicious joke that he allowed himself to make on his pious colleague, was to call him, "the Doctor of the Sacred Sitting-Bath." His jealousy was cautious, mocking and calm.

He sometimes added: "Oh! that fellow, he understands a sick man to the bottom—and that is worth more to us than to understand the sickness!"

But, lo and behold! one morning, a noble Spanish family, the Duke and Duchess of Ramas-Aldaverra, arrived, and brought with them their physician, who was an Italian, Dr. Mazelli, of Milan.

He was a young man of thirty, tall, slender, and a very handsome fellow, who wore a mustache.

From the very first evening, he made a conquest of the *table d'hôte;* for the Duke, a melancholy man, monstrously fat, had a horror of isolation and wished to take his meals in the dining-room. Dr. Mazelli almost at once knew all the names of the hotel habitués, and he had a pleasant word for every man, a compliment for every lady, and even a smile for every one of the servants.

He was seated at the right of the Duchess, a handsome woman between thirty-five and forty years of

age, with a pale complexion, black eyes, and dark hair, and he said to her, as every dish was passed: "Very little," or, perhaps, "No, not that," or sometimes, "Yes, eat some of that." And he filled her glass with his own hand, with the greatest care, measuring very exactly the proportions of wine and water that he mingled.

He also regulated the Duke's food, but with obvious carelessness. Besides, the patient paid no heed to his advice, but devoured everything with a bestial voracity. He drank at every meal two decanters of pure wine, then dropped down into a chair out in the air, in front of the hotel, whining with pain, and lamenting over his digestion. After the first dinner, Dr. Mazelli, who had judged and weighed everyone there with a glance of his eye, went on the terrace of the Casino, to join Gontran, who was smoking a cigar, and introduced himself and began to chat.

At the close of an hour they were good friends. Next day he got an introduction to Christiane, as she was going to her bath, and gained her interest in ten minutes' conversation. The same day, he placed them on a friendly footing with the Duchess, who had no fondness for solitude, either.

He looked out for everything in the Spaniards' home. He gave excellent advice to the chef in regard to the cooking, to the lady's maid valuable suggestions of the hygiene of the head, to preserve the brilliant lustre of her mistress' hair, its superb shade and abundance. To the coachman, he gave useful information on veterinary medicine. Above all, he knew how to make the hours pass quickly and lightly, to hunt up amusements, and to make in the hotels well-chosen acquaintances with fellow-travellers.

The Duchess said to Christiane, in speaking of him:

" He is a wonderful man, dear Madame, and he knows everything, he does everything. It is to him that I owe my figure."

" What, your figure? "

" Yes, I was beginning to grow fat, and he saved me with his diet and liqueurs."

He knew, besides, how to make even medicine interesting, he spoke of it with such ease, such gaiety, and with a slight skepticism that served to convince his listeners of his superiority.

" It's very simple," he said, " I do not believe in remedies. Or, rather, I scarcely believe in them. The old school of medicine started with the assumption that there was a remedy for everything. They thought that God, in His divine benevolence, had created drugs for all diseases, only He had left to men—out of malice, perhaps— the trouble of discovering these drugs. Now, men have succeeded in discovering a vast number without even knowing for what disease each one is adapted. Really there are no remedies; there are only diseases. When a disease declares itself, we must interrupt its course, according to some, hasten it according to others, by some means or other. Each school praises its own method. In the very same case, one will find the most strongly contrasted methods, and the most opposed remedies employed. Ice will be used by one and extreme heat by another, fasting will be recommended by this one and forced nourishment by that one. I am omitting the innumerable poisonous products that chemistry obtains for us from plants and minerals. All these have an effect, it is true, but no one knows what. Sometimes it cures, sometimes it kills."

And with a great deal of vivacity, he pointed out the impossibility of certainty, and the lack of any scientific basis until organic chemistry and biological chemistry should become the basis of a new school of medicine. He narrated anecdotes about the monstrous errors of the greatest physicians, proving the insanity and falsity of their pretended science.

" Make the body carry on its functions," he said, " make the skin, the muscles, all the organs, and especially the stomach, which is the foster-father of the whole machine, its regulator and storehouse of life, carry on their functions."

He affirmed that at will, simply by dieting, he could make people gay or sad, capable of physical or intellectual labor, according to the food that he ordered. That by this method he could even act on the cerebral faculties, on the memory, on the imagination, on all the manifestations of the mind. And he concluded jokingly, in these words:

" As for me, I cure by massage and curaçoa."

He attributed wonders to massage, and spoke of the Hollander, Hamstrang, as if he were a god, who accomplished miracles. Then, showing his fine, white hands, he would say:

" With these one might resuscitate the dead."

And the Duchess added:

" The fact is, he massages to perfection."

He also praised alcoholic liquors, taken in small quantities to stimulate the stomach at certain times, and he made mixed drinks, scientifically compounded, that the Duchess had to drink at certain hours, either before or after her meals.

He could be seen every day going to the *Café du Casino,* about half-past nine, when he asked for his bottles. They were brought to him fastened with

little locks of silver of which he had the key. He poured out a little of one, then a little of another, slowly, into a very pretty blue glass that a very conventional footman held with due respect.

Then the doctor ordered:

"There! Take that to the Duchess at her bath to drink before she dresses on coming out of the water."

And when they asked him out of curiosity: "What have you got in there?" he answered, "Nothing but fine anisette, very pure curaçoa, and excellent bitters."

This handsome physician in a few days became the center of admiration of all the invalids. And all sorts of schemes were employed to get from him some advice.

When he was going along the paths of the park, at the time when people were promenading, one heard nothing but the exclamation, "Doctor!" from all the chairs where beautiful women were sitting, young women, who were resting a little between two glasses from the Christiane Spring. Then when he paused with a smile on his lips, they drew him away for a few moments along the little path bordering the stream.

They talked to him first of this and that, then discreetly, adroitly, coquettishly, they reached the question of health—but carelessly, as if it were an indifferent matter.

For this doctor was not at all at the disposal of the public. They did not pay him and they could not call him in, for he belonged to the Duchess, and to no one but the Duchess. This very fact excited people's efforts and roused their desire to consult him. And when it was whispered, very low, that the Duchess was jealous, very jealous, there was a des-

perate strife among all these ladies to obtain advice from the handsome Italian doctor.

He gave it without having to be begged very hard.

Then a play of intimate confidences began among the ladies who had been favored by his advice, to show his solicitude for each one.

"Oh, my dear, he asked me such questions—why, such questions!"

"Very indiscreet?"

"Oh! indiscreet. Say rather frightful! I positively did not know what to answer. He wanted to know things, why, things——"

"It was just the same with me."

"And with me—with such details—so—so personal! It's very embarrassing to answer such questions as those. But one can easily understand that it is necessary."

"Oh! all together. Health depends on such slight details. As for me, he has promised to give me massage in Paris this winter. I need it very much to complete the treatment here."

"Tell me, my dear, what are you planning to do? One cannot pay him?"

"Mon Dieu! I had thought of giving him a scarf pin. He must like them, for he has two or three very pretty ones, already."

"Oh! how you have upset my plans. I had the very same idea. Well, then, I will give him a ring."

And they plotted surprises to please him, ingenious little gifts to touch him, pretty little tricks to fascinate him.

He was the talk of the day, the great subject of conversation, the sole object of public interest, when the news spread that the Count, Gontran de Ravenel, was courting Charlotte Oriol with the intention of

marrying her. This became at once a source of deafening gossip in Enval.

Since the evening when he had opened the inaugural ball of the Casino with her, Gontran had been constantly with her. In public he showed towards her all the little attentions that men use to please, without any attempt at concealment. And their relations in general assumed a gay and natural courtesy that bid fair to lead them to love.

They saw one another almost every day, for the girls had formed a strong friendship for Christiane, in which, no doubt, was mingled a touch of flattered vanity. Gontran, all at once, no longer left his sister, and he planned pleasure parties for the mornings and games for the evenings, which greatly surprised Christiane and Paul. Then they saw that he gave all his attention to Charlotte, gaily teased her, complimented her without seeming to, showed her those thousand trifling attentions that link two persons in the bonds of love. The young girl, who was now accustomed to the free-and-easy manners of this lively fellow, used to Parisian society, at first thought nothing of it, and following her confiding, straightforward nature, she laughed and played with him as she would have with a brother.

But when she had gone home with her older sister after a party at the hotel, where Gontran several times had tried to kiss her as forfeits in a game of "fly-pigeon," Louise, who had seemed anxious and nervous for some time, said to her bruskly:

"You would do well to be more careful in your bearing. M. Gontran does not behave properly to you."

"Not properly? Why, what has he said?"

"You know very well, don't act the simpleton. At this rate you would soon be compromised. And

if you can't look after your own conduct, it's my duty to attend to it."

Charlotte, confused and ashamed, faltered:

"But I don't know—I assure you—I have seen nothing——"

Her sister answered severely:

"Listen, this must not continue. If he wishes to marry you, papa must consider it and give him an answer; but if he is just flirting, he must stop at once."

Then, suddenly, Charlotte grew angry, without knowing why or wherefore. She was annoyed now that her sister should take it upon herself to direct and reprimand her, and she told her with her voice trembling and her eyes filled with tears that she should not have interfered with what did not concern her. She stammered, exasperated, warned by a vague but sure instinct that jealousy had been awakened in the bitter heart of Louise.

They parted without any embrace, and Charlotte wept in her bed as she thought of things that she had never foreseen.

Gradually her tears ceased and she began to reflect.

Yes, it was true that Gontran's manner had changed. She had been conscious of this without understanding it. Now she understood it. He paid her on all occasions pretty, delicate compliments. Once he had kissed her hand. What did he wish? She pleased him, but to what point? Might it by chance be possible that he would marry her? And at once she seemed to hear, somewhere in the air, in the empty darkness of space where her dreams were beginning to flit away, a voice calling: "Comtesse de Ravenel!"

Her excitement was so strong that she sat up in

bed. Then, in her bare feet, she hunted for her slippers under the chair on which she had thrown her dress, and she went to open the window without realizing what she was doing, to give room to her hopes.

She heard them talking in the lower hall, and Colosse's raised voice saying: "Let it alone. Let it alone. There will be time to see. Father will arrange it. There is no harm in it yet. It's father's business to attend to it."

She saw the light streaming in a bright square from the window below her. She wondered: "Who is there? What are they talking about?" A shadow passed. It was her sister! Then she had not gone to bed. Why? But the light was extinguished, and Charlotte began to muse again over the things that were agitating her heart.

She could not sleep now. Did he love her? Oh, no! Not yet! But he might love her because she pleased him! And if he grew to love her very much, desperately, as people do in society, he would no doubt marry her.

Born in a home of vine-dressers, although she had been educated in the convent attended by the fashionable young ladies of Clermont, she had still retained the modesty and humility of the peasant. She thought that she might marry a notary, perhaps, or a lawyer or a doctor. But the ambition to become a real society lady with a title of nobility before her name had never entered her mind. Scarcely, even when she was finishing a love story, had she dreamed of this charming thought, which flitted away from her mind as chimeras would. Now, here was this unexpected, almost impossible thing, suddenly called up by some words of her sister, and it seemed to be approaching her, like a ship's sail before the wind.

She murmured between her lips with every breath

that she drew: "Comtesse de Ravenel." And the darkness under her closed lashes was illumined in the night by visions. She saw beautiful parlors lighted up, lovely, smiling ladies, handsome carriages waitng before the steps of a château and tall servants in livery bowing as she passed.

She was too warm—her heart beat fast. She rose a second time to drink a glass of water, and stood for some moments barefooted on the cold floor of her room.

Then a little calmed, she finally fell asleep. But she woke before the dawn, her veins still pulsing with the excitement.

She was ashamed of her little room, with its white walls that had been white-washed by the glazier of the place, of her poor cotton curtains, and of the two straw-bottomed chairs that never left their places at the two corners of the bureau.

She felt that she was a peasant, in the midst of this rustic furniture that told her origin. She felt humble, unworthy of this handsome, mocking fellow whose fair, laughing face floated before her eyes, faded away, then returned, gradually took possession of her, and already had a place in her heart.

Then she jumped out of bed and ran to get her mirror, her little hand mirror, as large as the bottom of a plate, then she lay down again with her mirror in her hands and she looked at her face in the midst of her loosely hanging hair, against the white background of the pillow.

Sometimes she laid down on the coverings the little glass that showed her her image, and she thought how impossible this marriage would be, the distance between them was so great. Then a throb of disappointment almost choked her. But right away she looked again in the mirror and smiled to

cheer herself, and, as she thought that she was pretty, the difficulties disappeared.

When she went down to breakfast, her sister, who seemed irritable, asked her:

"What are you planning to do to-day?"

Charlotte answered without hesitation:

"Aren't we going to drive to Royat with Madame Andermatt?"

Louise replied:

"You will go alone then, but you would do better, after what I told you last night——"

The younger interrupted her:

"I am not asking your advice. Attend to your own affairs."

And they said nothing more.

Père Oriol and Jacques came in and sat down at the table. The old man asked almost immediately:

"What are you going to do to-day, girls?"

Charlotte did not give her sister a chance to answer, and said:

"Oh! I am going to Royat with Madame Andermatt."

The two men looked at her with a very satisfied air, and the father muttered with the engaging smile that he had in treating advantageous business affairs:

"That's good, that's good."

She was more surprised at this secret satisfaction betrayed by their whole manner, than by the open anger of Louise, and she wondered, a little troubled: "Have they been talking it over all together?"

After the meal was finished, she went back to her room, put on her hat, took her parasol, threw a light wrap over her shoulders and walked towards the hotel; for they were to leave at half-past nine. Christiane was surprised that Louise had not come.

Charlotte felt she was blushing a little as she answered:

"She is quite tired; I think she has a headache."

They got into the landau, the big six-seated landau that they still always used. The Marquis and his daughter sat in the back, and the little Oriol girl then found that her seat was between the young men, riding backwards.

They passed by Tournoël; then followed a beautiful winding road, shaded with walnut and chestnut trees, that wound round the foot of the mountain. Charlotte several times felt that Gontran pressed too closely against her, but not so much that she could feel offended at it. As he was seated at her right, he spoke very near to her cheek, and she did not dare to turn to answer him, fearing his breath that she already felt on her lips, and fearing, too, to look into his eyes, lest she should be embarrassed by their expression.

He whispered to her flattering nonsense, amusing little jokes, and pleasant and agreeable compliments.

Christiane scarcely spoke at all; for she felt tired and ill. And Paul seemed sad and pre-occupied. The Marquis alone was free from worry or trouble, and talked along in the gay and graceful manner of an egotistical old nobleman.

They got out of the landau at the park at Royat to listen to the band, and Gontran took Charlotte's arm, and started off with her ahead. The army of bathers, on the seats around the kiosk where the orchestra leader was beating time for the brass instruments and the violins, watched the strollers pass by. The women were showing off their dresses by spreading them out as much as possible; and their

dainty summer hats made them look still more charming.

Charlotte and Gontran wandered about among the people who were seated looking for ludicrous spectacles over which to make merry.

Every moment they heard some one say behind them: "Look! that's a pretty girl." Gontran was flattered, and wondered if they thought she was his sister, his wife or his sweetheart.

Christiane sat between her father and Paul, and watching them pass by several times, thought that their youth and gaiety was running away with them, and called them to her to quiet them. But they did not pay the least attention, and kept on wandering among the crowd and enjoyed themselves with their whole hearts.

She said in a low voice to Paul Bretigny:

"He will end by compromising her. We must talk to him this evening when we go back."

Paul answered:

"I have thought about that already. You are quite right."

They went for dinner to one of the restaurants of Clermont-Ferrand, as those of Royat, in the judgment of the Marquis, who was quite a gourmand, were very indifferent. They reached home at nightfall.

Charlotte had grown serious. Gontran had closely pressed her hand when he handed her her gloves, as she was leaving the table. Her young girl's conscience was suddenly troubled. That was an avowal! a bold step! an impropriety! What ought she to do? Speak to him? But what could she say? To get angry would be absurd! So much tact was needed in these matters! But if she did nothing and said nothing, she would appear to accept his

advances, to be an accomplice, to give an answering "yes" to this pressure of his hand.

And she weighed the situation, and blamed herself for having been too gay and familiar at Royat; and now she thought that her sister had been right, and that she was compromised, lost! The carriage rolled along the road, Paul and Gontran smoked in silence, the Marquis nodded, Christiane looked at the stars, and Charlotte could scarcely restrain her tears, —for she had taken three glasses of champagne.

When they had returned home, Christiane said to her father:

"As it is dark, will you take the young lady to her house?"

The Marquis at once offered his arm and started off with her.

Paul took Gontran by the shoulders and whispered in his ear:

"Come and talk for five minutes with your sister and me."

And they went up to the little sitting-room that was connected with the Andermatts' apartments.

As soon as they were seated, Christiane said:

"Listen, M. Paul and I are going to give you a moral lecture."

"A lecture!—But what about? I am as well-behaved as a statue,—for want of opportunity."

"Don't make fun. You are doing something very unwise and dangerous, without even thinking. You are compromising this young girl."

He appeared to be greatly astonished.

"Whom do you mean? Charlotte?"

"Yes, Charlotte."

"I compromise Charlotte? I?"

"Yes, you are compromising her. Everyone is talking about it here, and then besides you have been

very—very—frivolous in the park at Royat. Isn't this so, Bretigny? "

Paul replied:

" Yes, madame, I agree entirely with what you say."

Gotran turned his chair, bestrode it like a horse, took a fresh cigar, lighted it and began to laugh.

" So then I am compromising Charlotte Oriol? "

He waited several seconds to watch the effect of his answer, and then added:

" Well, how do you know that I am not going to marry her? "

Christiane gave a start of surprise.

" Marry her? You? Why, you are crazy! "

" Why so? "

" That—that little—peasant girl——"

" Trala—la—prejudice. Do you learn it from your husband? "

As she did not make any reply to this direct argument, he went on, framing questions and answers himself.

" Is she pretty? Yes! Is she well-educated? Yes! And more artless, refined, simple, and frank than society girls. She knows as much as any of them, for she speaks English and the language of Auvergne, which makes two foreign languages. She will be as rich as any heiress of the faubourg that was called Saint-Germain, but is now to be re-christened Faubourg Saint-Dêche. Finally, if she is a peasant's daughter, she will only be the more healthy, and will give me fine children. So there."

As he all the time seemed to be laughing and joking, Christiane asked him hesitatingly:

" Tell me, are you talking seriously? "

" Parbleu! Why not? She is charming—that little girl. She has a good heart and a pretty face,

a gay nature, a good disposition, rosy cheeks, bright eyes, white teeth, long hair, thick and shining. And her vine-dresser of a father will be rich as Crœsus, thanks to your husband, my dear sister. What more do you want? A peasant's daughter! Well, isn't a peasant's daughter worth all the daughters of dishonorable business men who pay so dearly for dukes with doubtful titles, and all the daughters of a corrupt nobility that the Empire gave us, and all the daughters of doubtful parentage that one meets in society? Why, if I should marry that young girl, I should be doing the first good and sensible action of my life!"

Christiane reflected, then, suddenly convinced, overcome and delighted, she said:

"After all, what he says is true. It's altogether right and just! Then you will marry her, my dear Gontran?"

It was then he who calmed her.

"Not so fast—not so fast—let me think in my turn. I say only: *If* I should marry her, I should be doing the first good and sensible action of my life. That doesn't say yet that I *will marry* her. But I am thinking about it, I am studying her, I am courting her a little to see if she really pleases me wholly. Finally, I will not give you either yes or no as an answer, but it is nearer yes than no."

Christiane turning to Paul said:

"What do you think of it, Monsieur Bretigny?"

Sometimes she called him Monsieur Bretigny and sometimes just Bretigny.

He, who was always fascinated by things in which he saw a touch of grandeur, by marriages beneath one's position that seemed generous, and by all the show of sentiment behind which the human heart conceals itself, replied:

"For my part, I think he is right. If he likes her, let him marry her. He could not find anyone better."

But the Marquis and Andermatt now came in, and the conversation was turned into another channel. The two young men then went to the Casino to see if the billiard-hall was still open.

From that day on, Christiane and Paul seemed to favor the open courtship that Gontran carried on with Charlotte.

They invited the young girl more often, and kept her to dinner, and they ended by treating her as if she were already one of the family.

She saw through all this, understood it, and was wild with delight over it! Her little heart beat like a drum, and she built fantastic castles in Spain. Still, Gontran had said nothing to her, but his manner, his words, his tone of voice, his air of more serious courtesy, and his caressing look, seemed to say to her every day: "I have chosen you; you shall be my wife."

And the air of gentle friendship, of modest surrender, of chaste reserve that she showed now towards him, seemed to answer: "I know it, and I will say 'yes' when you ask for my hand."

In the young girl's family this was talked over in whispers. Louise scarcely spoke to her, except to vex her with allusions that would wound her, and with sharp, cutting words. Père Oriol and Jacques seemed well satisfied.

Yet she had never really asked herself if she loved this handsome suitor whose wife she would no doubt become. She liked him, she thought constantly about him, she considered him handsome, brilliant, elegant, and she thought above all about what she would do when he had married her.

At Enval, everyone had forgotten all about the deadly rivalries of the doctors and the owners of the springs, guesses as to whether the Duchess of Ramas was in love with her doctor, all the gossip that flows with the water of the hot-springs resorts, and the all-absorbing subject was: Count Gontran of Ravenel was going to marry the Oriol girl.

Then Gontran thought that the moment had come, and one morning, taking Andermatt by the arm, as they were leaving the table, he said:

" My dear fellow, strike the iron while it is hot! This is the exact state of affairs. The little girl is waiting for my proposal, without my having committed myself as yet, but she will not reject it, you may be sure. We must sound the father in such a way that we may secure both your interests and mine at the same time."

Andermatt replied:

" Don't worry. I will take care of the matter. I shall sound him this very day, without either committing you or advancing your suit. Then when the situation is clearly understood, I will be ready to talk."

" That suits perfectly."

Then after a pause of several seconds, Gontran continued:

" Hold on. It is perhaps my last day of bachelorhood. I am going to Royat, where I saw some acquaintances the other day. I'll be back at night, and I will tap at your door to find out about it."

He had his horse saddled, and went along by the mountain, breathing in the pure light air, and galloping at moments so as to feel the swift caress of the air touching the fresh skin of his cheeks and tickling his mustache.

The evening at Royat was a merry one. Gontran met some friends who had girls with them. They were a long time at supper, and he came back very late. Everyone was asleep in the Mont-Oriol hotel when Gontran tapped at Andermatt's door.

At first no one answered. Then, as the knocking grew loud, a hoarse voice, a sleepy voice, grumbled from within:

"Who is there?"

"It's I, Gontran."

"Wait, I will open the door."

Andermatt appeared in his nightshirt. His face was puffed up, his beard bristling, his head tied up in a silk handkerchief. Then he went back to his bed, sat up, and stretching his hands over the covering said:

"Well, my dear boy, it won't work. This is the situation. I've sounded that old fox, Oriol, without mentioning you, saying only that one of my friends —perhaps I let him think that it concerned Paul Bretigny—might be a good match for one of his daughters, and I asked what dowry he would give them. He asked me in his turn what the young man's fortune amounted to, and I placed it at three hundred thousand francs, with expectations."

"But I have nothing," murmured Gontran.

"I will lend them to you, my dear boy. If we put this thing through together, your lands will yield me enough to reimburse me."

Gontran sneered. "Oh, yes! I'll have the girl and you will have the money."

But Andermatt was all out of patience with this.

"If I am to take care of you just so that you may insult me, there's an end of it. We will stop right here——"

Gontran apologized:

" Don't be angry, my dear friend, and forgive me. I know that you are a very honest man, and above reproach in matters of business. I would not ask you for a pourboire if I were your coachman, but I would trust my fortune to you if I were a millionaire——"

William, appeased, resumed:

" We will return to that later. Let us finish at present the main question. The old man was not fooled by my ruse, and answered: ' It depends on which one of the girls is concerned. If it regards Louise, the elder, this will be her dowry.' And he enumerated to me all the lands surrounding the establishment, those connecting the baths with the hotel and the hotel with the Casino, in short, all those that are indispensable to us, those which have an inestimable value to me. On the other hand, he will give to the younger daughter all the other side of the mountain, which will also, undoubtedly, be worth a great deal of money later, but is of no value to me. I tried in every possible way to persuade him to interchange these dowries. I ran against the obstinacy of a mule. He will not change, that's certain. Think, how does it strike you? "

Gontran, much troubled and perplexed, replied:

" What do you think about it, yourself? Do you think he may have had me in mind when he made this division? "

" I don't doubt it. The boor said to himself: ' As long as he likes the younger one, let us keep the sac.' He has hoped to give you his daughter, while he kept his best lands. And then, perhaps, he wanted to give the elder the advantage. He loves her best—who knows?—she is more like him—she is more shrewd —more clever, more practical. I believe in her thor-

oughly. Now, were I in your place—I would change my stick to the other shoulder."

But Gontran, dazed, murmured:

"Diable—diable—diable! And Charlotte's lands—you don't want them, then?"

Andermatt exclaimed:

"I—no—a thousand times no! I need those that adjoin my baths, my hotel and my Casino. It's very clear. I would give nothing for the others, that can only be sold later, in small lots, to private persons."

Gontran kept repeating:

"Diable — diable — here's a stupid business. Then you advise me?"

"I don't advise you at all. I think that you had better reflect before you decide between the sisters."

"Yes—yes—that's right—I will reflect—first I will sleep—that brings counsel."

He rose, but Andermatt detained him:

"Pardon me, my dear fellow, two words on another subject. I appear not to understand, but I understand perfectly the allusions with which you constantly annoy me, and I wish to hear no more of them.

"You reproach me with being a Jew, that is to say, with making money, being miserly, with being a speculator with methods bordering on swindling. Now, my dear fellow, I spend my life in lending you, that is, *giving* you this money that I make not without difficulty. But we will end this subject. There is one point, however, that I will not pass over. No, I am not a miser! As a proof of this I give your sister presents of twenty thousand francs, I gave your father a Theodore Rousseau worth ten thousand francs, just because he fancied it, and I gave you, when you came here, the horse which you have just ridden to Royat.

" Then in what way am I avaricious? In this, that I will not allow myself to be robbed. And all of my race are like that, and we are right, Monsieur. I wish to tell you this once for all. People treat us as if we were misers, because we know exactly the value of things. For you, a piano is a piano, a chair is a chair, a pair of trousers is a pair of trousers. For us, too, but these things represent at the same time a value, an appreciable and precise selling value, which a practical man should estimate at a glance, not for the sake of economy, but so as not to patronize fraud.

" What would you say if a tobacconist asked you four sous for a postage stamp or for a box of wax matches? You would go, Monsieur, in search of a policeman for the sake of one sou, yes, for one sou. You would be so indignant. And that is because you chance to know the value of these two objects. Well, I know the value of all articles of traffic, and that indignation which would seize you, if four sous were asked for a stamp, I should experience if I were asked twenty francs for an umbrella that is worth fifteen. Do you understand? I protest against the established, incessant, and abominable robbery of merchants, servants and drivers. I protest against the lack of commercial probity of all your race that despises us. I give fees that I ought to give, proportional to the service rendered, and not the chance fee that you fling away without knowing why, and which varies from five to a hundred sous, depending on the caprice of your mood! Do you understand me? "

Gontran had risen, and smiling with that delicate irony that was so well adapted to his speech, said:

" Yes, my dear fellow, I understand, and you are quite right, much more so than my grandfather, the

old Marquis de Ravenel, who scarcely left anything to my poor father, because of the bad habit he had of never taking up change given him by salesmen when he had paid for anything. He thought that was unworthy of a gentleman, and always gave a round sum and the whole coin."

And Gontran went out, with an air of great satisfaction.

CHAPTER III

AN AGREEMENT

THEY were just going to take their places at the dinner table in the private dining-room of the Andermatt and Ravenel families, when Gontran threw open the door, and announced: "The Mlles. Oriol."

They came in with embarrassment, pushed forward by Gontran, who laughingly explained:

"See, I carried them both off, on the open street. That made a scandal, I can tell you. I brought them to you by force, because I must explain myself, and I could not do it in the center of the town."

He took their hats and their parasols, that they still carried, for they were returning from a walk, made them sit down, kissed his sister, shook hands with his father, his brother-in-law and Paul, and then, turning to Louise Oriol, said:

"And now, Mademoiselle, will you tell me what you have had against us for some time?"

She seemed frightened, like a bird in a net.

"Why, nothing, Monsieur, nothing at all! Who made you believe that?"

"It was everything, everything in the world! You came no longer here. You would not go with us any more in our Noah's Ark (for so he had christened the big landau). You assume a distant air when I meet you and speak to you."

" Why, no, Monsieur, I assure you."

" Why, yes, Mam'zelle, I declare to you. At all events, I don't want it to go on any longer at all, and I am going to make a treaty of peace with you this very day. Oh! you know, I am very obstinate. There is no use in your looking black at me; I know how to get the best of those airs and make you as gracious to me as your sister, who is an angel of gentleness."

Dinner was announced, and they passed into the dining-room. Gontran took Louise's arm.

He was very attentive to her and her sister, and divided his compliments with admirable tact, saying to the younger:

" You, you are our comrade, I am going to neglect you for some days. One takes less trouble for friends than for others, you know."

And he said to the elder:

" Now, you, I am going to fascinate you, Mademoiselle, and I warn you as an honest foe, I will even make love to you. Ah! you are blushing, that's a good sign. You will find that I am very nice when I take pains. Isn't that so, Mademoiselle Charlotte? "

And indeed they blushed, both of them, and Louise stammered in her grave way:

" Oh! Monsieur, how foolish you are! "

He replied:

" Bah! You will hear a great deal more when you are married and out in society, which won't be long. It's then that men will give you compliments! "

Christiane and Paul said how glad they were that he had brought Louise Oriol. The Marquis smiled and was amused at these childish affectations. Andermatt thought: " He is no fool, the jolly dog."

And Gontran was vexed at the rôle he was forced to play, urged by his affections towards Charlotte, and by his interests towards Louise.

He muttered between his teeth, with a grim smile the latter: "Ah, your old rascal of a father thought

that he would play me a trick, but I will carry it off with a high hand over you, my little girl, and you will see if I don't manage it right."

And he compared them as he looked from one to the other. He certainly liked the young one best. She was more entertaining, more vivacious, with her slightly *retroussé* nose, her bright eyes, her straight forehead, and her fine teeth that were a trifle too prominent in her rather large mouth.

Yet the other was handsome, too, though colder

and less lively. She would never have the same merry wit, or the charm in home life, but when her name was announced at the opening of a ball: "Madame, the Countess of Ravenel," she would carry off her title well, perhaps better than the younger sister, just as soon as she grew accustomed to it, and to associating with well-bred people. All the same, he was furious, he wanted to get even with them both, with the father and the brother, too; and he promised himself that he would pay them back for this mishap later on when he should be the master.

When they had gone back to the sitting-room, he had Louise tell fortunes with cards; for she was very clever at forecasting the future. The Marquis, Andermatt and Charlotte listened with interest, fascinated, in spite of themselves, by the mystery of the unknown, by the possibility of the improbable, by that unconquerable belief in the marvelous that haunts mankind, and often disturbs the strongest intellects, when they are confronted with the silliest inventions of charlatans.

Paul and Christiane chatted together in the embrasure of an open window.

She had been wretchedly unhappy for some time past, for she felt that she was no longer tenderly loved. And this shadow that had fallen on their affection was increased every day by the fault of both. She had felt the first suspicion of this unhappy change on the evening of the fête, when she had taken Paul walking on the road. But while she realized that he had no longer the same tenderness in his glance, the same gentleness in his voice, the same intense devotion as before, she was unable to divine the cause of this change.

It had continued now for a long time, ever since

the day when she had joyfully told him that she now really had a secret to tell him, for at these words a slight shudder of distaste had passed over him.

Then at all their meetings she told him of this hope that made her heart leap with joy. But this absorption in a thought that to him was shameful and distasteful shattered his exalted devotion to the idol that he had worshipped.

Later when he saw her, changed, thin, hollow-cheeked, and sallow, he thought that she ought to have spared him this sight, that she should have retired for several months to appear afterwards fresher and prettier than ever, that she should have studied to make him forget this, or perhaps learned how to unite with the coquettish charm of a sweetheart, the other charm, wise and loving, of a young mother, who knows enough not to let her child be seen except from a distance, done up in pink ribbons.

She had had, besides, a rare chance to show this tact that he expected of her, by spending the summer at Mont-Oriol and leaving him in Paris, so that he should not see her when she had lost her freshness and beauty. He had hoped very much that she would understand his feeling.

But she had hardly reached Auvergne, before she began begging him to come in incessant and despairing letters, so endless and pressing that through weakness and through pity he had come. And now she overwhelmed him with her ungracious and mournful tenderness. He felt a boundless desire to escape from her, not to see her any more, never to hear her again harping on this trash about love, that was so tiresome and out of place. He would like to have told her plainly what was in his mind, to explain to her how tactless and foolish her behavior was, but he could not do that, and he dared not leave.

But he could not restrain himself from showing her proofs of his impatience by bitter and wounding words.

She was all the more distressed by this, because every day she felt more wretched and ill, and needed more than ever to be consoled, fondled, and surrounded with affection. She loved him with that complete abandon of body and soul, of her whole being, which sometimes renders love a boundless and limitless sacrifice. She did not feel as if he were only her lover, but as if she were his wife, his companion, his devotee, his adorer, his prostrate slave, his chattel. For her it was no longer a question of gallantry, of coquetry, of the desire to always please him, or of the need of fresh favors, since she belonged to him wholly, because they were bound by that link that was so sweet and so strong—the child that would soon be born. As soon as they were alone in the window seat, she began her tender laments once more.

"Paul, my dear Paul, tell me, do you love me always just as much?"

"Why, yes! But see, you keep asking me that every day; it ends by being monotonous."

"Pardon me! It is because I can no more believe it; and I long for you to reassure me, I long to hear you tell me ceaselessly these words that are so sweet. And as you no longer say them as often as you once did, I must ask, implore and beg for them."

"Oh, well then, I love you! But let's talk of something else, I entreat you!"

"Oh! how hard-hearted you are!"

"Why, no, I am not hard-hearted. Only—only—you don't understand—you don't understand——"

"Oh, yes! I understand very well that you do

not love me any more. If you knew how I am grieving!"

"Come, Christiane, I beg you will not make me nervous. If you could only realize how awkwardly you are behaving——"

"Oh! if you love me, you would never speak so."

"But, *sacrebleu,* if I didn't love you still, I would never have come."

"Listen. You belong to me now, you are mine, and I am yours. There is between us that bond of budding life that nothing can break, but promise me that if some day, in the future, you should cease to love me, you will tell me."

"Yes, I promise you."

"Will you swear it to me?"

"I swear it to you."

"But then we would stay friends, just the same, wouldn't we?"

"Of course we would stay friends."

"The day when you no longer love me, you will come to me, and you will say to me: 'My little Christiane, I am still fond of you, but it is no longer the same thing. Let us be friends now, only friends.'"

"It's agreed. I promise."

"Will you swear it?"

"I swear it to you."

"Nevertheless, it would cause me great sorrow! How you worshipped me last year!"

A voice called out behind them:

"Madame la Duchesse de Ramas-Aldaverra!"

She came to make a neighborly call, for Christiane received the principal bathers, every evening, as princes hold receptions in their kingdoms.

Dr. Mazelli followed the handsome Spanish lady

with a smiling and deferential air. The two women shook hands, sat down and began to talk.

Andermatt called to Paul:

"My friend, do come. Mademoiselle Oriol reads cards wonderfully, and has told us most surprising things."

He took him by the arm, and added:

"What a queer fellow you are, anyway! In Paris we never saw you even once a month, in spite of my wife's invitations. And fifteen letters were required to bring you here. And ever since you have arrived, one would think that you were losing a million francs a day, you have such a woe-begone face. Come, are you concealing some matter that worries you? Perhaps we could help you. You must tell us.

"Here at least you should be in good spirits. I am arranging for you two or three fêtes, that I think will be very successful."

The servant announced: "Madame Barre and Professor Cloche." The latter came in with his daughter, a red-haired, bold-looking widow. Then, almost immediately, the same valet called: "Professor Mas-Roussel."

His wife was with him. She looked pale and worn, and wore her hair drawn tightly back from her forehead.

Professor Remusot had left the evening before, after purchasing his châlet, under what were said to be exceptionally favorable conditions.

The two other doctors would have liked very much to know what these conditions were, but Andermatt only answered: "Oh, we have made advantageous little arrangements for everyone. If you should like to imitate his example, we would see if we could make an agreement—we would see. When

you have decided, if you will let me know, we will talk it over."

Dr. Latonne appeared in his turn, then Dr. Honorat, without his wife, whom he did not take out with him.

The sound of voices now filled the room, a murmur of conversation. Gontran did not leave Louise Oriol for a moment; he bent down confidentially, chatting in her ear, and from time to time said laughingly to some one passing near:

"She is an enemy of whom I am making a conquest."

Mazelli was seated near Professor Cloche's daughter. For several days he had followed her all the time, and she received his advances with provoking boldness.

The Duchess did not let them out of her sight, and seemed to be trembling with anger. Suddenly she rose, crossed the parlor, and broke up her doctor's tête-à-tête with the handsome red-haired widow.

"Come, Mazelli, we must go back. I do not feel quite well."

As soon as they were gone, Christiane, who had drawn near Paul, said to him:

"Poor woman! How much she must suffer!"

He asked carelessly:

"Whom do you mean?"

"The Duchess. Don't you see how jealous she is?"

He answered roughly:

"If you are going to wail over everything that you can get hold of, you will never make an end of weeping."

She turned away, ready to weep, truly, for she thought him cruel, and she sat down near Charlotte

Oriol, who was left alone, surprised and not understanding what Gontran meant. Christiane said to her, in such a way that the young girl would not understand to what her words referred:

"There are days when one wishes one were dead."

Andermatt, in a group of doctors, was telling of the extraordinary case of Père Clovis, whose legs were coming to life again. He seemed so convinced of it that no one could have doubted his good faith.

After he saw through the trick of the peasants and the paralytic, and realized that he had allowed himself to be duped and deceived the year before, simply because of the devouring wish he had to believe in the efficacy of the springs, and especially after he had been unable to free himself from the complaints of the old rascal, without bribing him, he had turned it into a telling advertisement, and worked wonders with it.

Mazelli just came in again, free now to do as he liked, since he had escorted his patient to her own apartment.

Gontran took his arm.

"Give me now, my handsome doctor, an opinion. Which of the Oriol girls do you like best?"

The handsome doctor whispered in his ear:

"For a sweetheart the younger, for a wife the elder."

Gontran laughed:

"Well, well, we are of exactly the same opinion. I am delighted!"

Then he went to his sister, who was still talking with Charlotte, and said:

"You don't know about it, do you? I have just decided that on Thursday we will go to the Puy de

la Nugère. It's the finest crater of the whole mountain chain. Everyone says they will go. It's settled."

Christiane murmured indifferently:

"I will do whatever you like."

But Professor Cloche, followed by his daughter, came up to take leave, and Mazelli, offering to escort them back, went out behind the young widow.

All the company left in a few minutes, for Christiane retired at eleven o'clock.

The Marquis, Paul and Gontran took the Oriol girls home. Gontran and Louise went on ahead, and Bretigny, walking a few steps behind them, felt Charlotte's arm tremble a little as it rested on his.

They all separated, calling to one another: "On Thursday at eleven, for lunch at the hotel."

As they were returning, they met Andermatt, who was detained in a corner of the park by Professor Mas-Roussel, who was saying:

"All right, if convenient to you, I will call to talk over with you to-morrow morning that little matter of the châlet."

William joined the young men as they went in, and drawing close to his brother-in-law's ear, whispered:

"My best compliments, my dear boy, you did admirably."

Gontran for the past two years had been harassed so much by the need of funds that his whole life had been spoiled. While he had been squandering the fortune that he inherited from his mother, he had allowed himself to live along with the careless indifference of his father, among a set of young men who were rich, blasé, and fast, that were mentioned every morning in the papers, who belonged to so-

ciety, but went out in it very little, for they preferred the companionship of fast women.

There were a dozen of the same set that met every evening at the same café on the boulevard, between midnight and three o'clock in the morning. Handsomely dressed, always wearing dress coats and white waistcoats, with shirt studs worth twenty louis, that they changed every month and bought at first-class jewelers, they lived with the single aim of amusing themselves, picking up women, about whom they talked, and getting money in all possible ways.

As they knew nothing except the scandals of yesterday, the echoes of alcoves and stables, duels and gambling tales, their horizon of thought was bounded by these limits.

They had known all the women who were for sale in the market of gallantry. They passed them on, gave them up, exchanged them and talked together of their points, as they might those of a race-horse. They also went with the ultra-fashionable and titled society that is talked so much about, and of which nearly all the women carry on recognized intrigues, under the indifferent, averted, closed, or unobservant eyes of their husbands. They discussed these women just as they did the others, and hardly recognized any distinction among them except for slight differences due to birth and social position.

As a result of using all sorts of tricks to get the money necessary for this kind of life: deceiving usurers, borrowing on all sides, putting off tradesmen, laughing in the tailor's face when he brought every six months a bill that had increased three thousand francs, listening to stories of the trickeries of unscrupulous women, watching people cheat in clubs, feeling that they themselves were robbed by

everyone—by servants, merchants, managers of large restaurants, and others—being cognizant of or connected with certain underhand money dealings, or dubious transactions, from which they hoped to get a few louis, their moral sense had become dulled and threadbare, and their sole point of honor consisted in fighting a duel the moment they were suspected of all the things of which they were capable or culpable.

All of this set, or nearly all, always finished at the end of about ten years of this sort of life, in a wealthy marriage, a scandal, a suicide, or a mysterious disappearance, as complete as death.

They counted principally on a wealthy marriage. Some trusted to their families to secure one, others looked around themselves without its being apparent, and they had lists of heiresses just as there are lists of houses for sale. They kept watch especially over the foreigners, North and South Americans, whom they dazzled by their fine style, their fame as men of the world, by reports of their success and the elegance of their appearance.

And the tradesmen also counted a great deal on the prospect of a wealthy marriage.

But the hunt after a girl with a rich dowry might be a long one. In any case it required investigations, and the exertion of fascinating the girl. It involved fatigues, visits, a great display of energy, of which Gontran, by nature careless, was absolutely incapable.

For a long time he had said to himself, feeling every day more pinched for the lack of money: "And yet, I must think about it." But he never did think of it, and saw no way out of his difficulty.

He was reduced to ingenious devices to obtain small sums, to all those dubious proceedings of peo-

ple who are at the end of their resources, and finally to long sojourns with his family, when Andermatt had suddenly suggested to him the idea of marrying one of the young Oriol girls.

At first he had kept silent, out of prudence, although the young girl appeared at first glance too far beneath him for him to be willing to consent to such an unequal marriage. But some moments of reflection had soon changed his view, and he had decided to woo her jestingly—a rapid fire flirtation—that would not compromise him, and would give him a chance to back out.

As he understood his brother-in-law perfectly, he knew that this propositon had been well thought out, weighed and arranged by him, that he considered her a great prize, difficult to find elsewhere.

There was no trouble to take either, except to stoop down and pick up a pretty girl, for he liked the younger very much, and he had often thought that she might be very agreeable to meet later on.

So he had chosen Charlotte Oriol, and in a short time had brought matters to the point when a formal proposal could be made.

Then, as a result of the father's giving his other daughter the dowry coveted by Andermatt, Gontran was obliged either to give up the marriage or to turn to the elder daughter.

His dissatisfaction was very great, and he had strongly thought at first of sending his brother-in-law to the devil, and remaining a bachelor until a new chance turned up.

But just then he was quite out of pocket, so much so that he had had to ask, for his play at the Casino, for twenty-five louis from Paul, after many other sums he had borrowed and never returned. And then he would have to hunt for a rich wife, find her

and win her. Perhaps he would have to struggle against the opposition of her family, while, without moving from the place, he could with a few days of attentive courting get the elder Oriol girl, just as he had known how to make a conquest of the younger. He would then be sure of having in his brother-in-law a banker whom he could make always responsible, everlastingly reproach, and whose cash-box would always be open to him.

As far as his wife was concerned, he would take her to Paris, and introduce her as the daughter of Andermatt's partner. Besides, she bore the name of the hot springs resort, to which he would never bring her back, never! never! in virtue of the law that rivers do not flow back to their sources. She had a nice face and figure, and was sufficiently distinguished to become very distinguished looking, intelligent enough to understand society, to hold her own, and take her place in it, and even to do him honor. His friends would say: " That jester there has married a handsome girl, and he seems to think that it was not a bad joke." Indeed, it would not be a joke on him at all, for he intended when he was married to resume his bachelor life with money in his pockets.

Thus he had turned to Louise Oriol, and profiting unconsciously by the jealousy wakened in the skittish heart of the young girl, had stirred in her a sleeping coquetry, and a vague wish to take from her sister this handsome lover that everyone called: " Monsieur le Comte."

She had not formulated this, she had not thought it out, or contrived it, for she was wholly surprised by their meeting and his carrying them off. But when she saw him so attentive and courteous, she felt, from his manner, his glances, and his whole at-

titude, that he was no longer in love with Charlotte, and without seeking to see further, she felt happy, joyful, almost victorious, as she was going to sleep.

On Thursday, they hesitated a long time before starting for the Puy de la Nugère. The overcast sky and the damp air made them fear rain. But Gontran insisted so much that he finally carried off those who could not make up their minds. Lunch had been a solemn affair. Christiane and Paul had quarrelled the evening before, for no apparent cause. Andermatt feared that Gontran's marriage would not take place, for Père Oriol had spoken of him that very morning in ambiguous terms. Gontran, who had been told of this, was furious, and determined to succeed. Charlotte, who felt a presentiment of her sister's triumph, without understanding at all the cause of this sudden change, was very anxious to stay in the village. Only with difficulty could they persuade her to go.

So the Noah's Ark, filled to the limit, carried its usual passengers toward the high plateau that commands a view of Volvic.

Louise Oriol, who had suddenly become very talkative, did the honors of the trip. She told how the rock underlying Volvic, which is simply the lava-flow from surrounding peaks, was used for building all the churches and houses of the country round. And this it is that gives to the towns of Auvergne their somber, charred look. She showed her companions the stone-yards where this rock was cut, pointed out the lava-flow that is worked as a quarry, from which the rough lava is taken out. Then she made them look with admiration at the colossal black Virgin who stands on a height and bends over the city of Volvic, which she protects.

After that, they climbed up toward the higher plateau, which is studded with extinct volcanoes. The horses walked with sure steps up the long, difficult road. Green woodlands bordered the way. And no one spoke any more.

Christiane was thinking of Tazenat. It was the same carriage! The people were the same, but their hearts were changed. Everything seemed as it was then! And yet—and yet! What had happened? Almost nothing! A little more love on her side! A little less on his! Almost nothing—the difference between growing and dying desires! Almost nothing!—the invisible rent that weariness makes in affection! Oh! almost nothing, almost nothing! And the changed glances of the eyes, for the same eyes no longer see the same face! What is in a glance? Almost nothing! The driver stopped and said: "It's here, to the right, along the footpath, in the wood. You have only to follow the path to reach the place."

They all got down from the carriage, except the Marquis, who thought that the weather was too warm. Louise and Gontran went on ahead, and Charlotte stayed behind with Paul and Christiane, who walked slowly. The way through the wood seemed to them very long. When they came to a crest covered with tall grasses, and which led by an ascending slope to the edge of the ancient crater, Louise and Gontran, who were both tall and slender, when they reached the summit, looked as if they were standing in the clouds. When the rest had caught up with them, Paul Bretigny's enthusiastic soul burst forth into poetry.

Around them, behind them, to the right, to the left, they were surrounded by strange, truncated cones, some rising prominently, others crushed down, but all preserving their strange aspect of extinct vol-

canoes. These heavy bases of mountains, with their flat summits, extended from south to west, on a vast, desolate looking plateau which, rising itself to a height of a thousand meters above Limagne, commanded a view of it further than the eye could reach, toward the east and north, toward the invisible horizon, always blue, always veiled in haze.

The Puy de Dôme, on the right, surpassed all its fellows with seventy to eighty now dormant craters. Farther on, rose the Puys de Gravenoire, de Crouel, de la Pedge, de Sault, de Noschamps, de la Vâche. Nearer were the Puy du Pariou, the Puy de Côme, and the Puys de Jumes, de Tressoux, de Louchadiere: a vast cemetery of volcanoes.

The young people looked at this with wonder. At their feet was the hollow of the first crater of la Nugère, a deep, grassy basin at the bottom of which one could still see three enormous blocks of brown lava, raised with the monster's last breath and sunk again into his dying throat, remaining there centuries on centuries, forever.

Gontran shouted:

"I intend to go down to the bottom. I want to see how they give up the ghost, these monsters. Come, Mesdemoiselles, let's have a little race down the slope. And catching Louise's arm, he drew her on. Charlotte followed, running behind them; then suddenly she stopped, watched them flying along, springing on arm in arm, and then, turning suddenly, she climbed up again towards Christiane and Paul, who were sitting on the grass at the crest of the slope. When she rejoined them, she fell on her knees, and hiding her face in Christiane's dress, began to sob bitterly.

Christiane, who had understood, and whom all the griefs of others had lately pierced like wounds

in her own soul, threw her arms round her neck, and, touched by her tears, murmured: "Poor little one, poor little one!" The girl continued weeping, prostrate, her face hidden, and with her hands that had fallen on the ground she tore up the grass, unconscious of what she was doing.

Bretigny first had risen, so as not to appear to have seen her, but the young girl's misery, the distress of this innocent heart, filled him suddenly with anger against Gontran. He, whom the deep anguish of Christiane exasperated, was touched to the depths of his heart by this first disillusion of a young girl.

He came back and knelt down in his turn to speak to her:

"There, there, calm yourself, I entreat you. They will come back again, calm yourself. They must not see you crying."

She sprang up, frightened at the thought that her sister might find her with tears in her eyes. Her throat was full of sobs that she held back—that she swallowed—that sank into her heart to make it more full of pain. She faltered:

"Yes—yes—it's over—it's nothing—it's all over—look—you don't notice it any more—do you—you don't notice it any more?"

Christiane wiped the tears from her face with her handkerchief; then dried her own eyes. She said to Paul:

"Do go and see what they are doing. We can't see them any more. They are hidden behind the blocks of lava. I will stay with this little girl and comfort her."

Bretigny had risen again, and said in a trembling voice:

"I will go—and I will bring them back, but there

will be something for me to settle with—your brother—this very day—and he shall explain his unjustifiable conduct after what he told us the other day."

He started to run down to the center of the crater.

Gontran, dragging Louise along, had rushed with all his force down the steep descent of the great hole, to hold her up, support her, make her breathless, dizzy and frightened. She, swept along by this wild rush, tried to stop him, gasping: "Oh! not so fast. I shall fall—why, you are mad. I shall fall! They were stopped by the blocks of lava, and stood both breathless beside them. Then they walked around the crater, and looked at the great rifts that formed a sort of cavern with two openings at the base of the crater.

When the dying volcano had thrown up this last mass of foaming lava, no longer able to hurl it to the sky, as it had done, it spewed it out, thick and half-cooled, and the mass froze on its dying lips.

"We must go in under there," said Gontran.

And he pushed the young girl in before him. Then, as soon as they were inside the grotto, he said:

"Well, Mademoiselle, now is the time to make you a declaration."

She was astounded.

"A declaration—to me!"

"Why, yes, in four words: I think you charming."

"You should say that to my sister."

"Oh! you know very well that I am not making a declaration to your sister!"

"Come, now!"

"Look here, you aren't a woman if you haven't understood that I paid attentions to her just to see what you would think of it! And what black looks you gave me! You looked furious! Oh! how pleased

I have been! Then I tried to show you with all possible consideration, what I thought of you!—"

No one had ever talked to her thus. She felt confused and delighted—her heart full of pride and joy.

He resumed:

"I know that I've acted shabbily to your little sister. Oh! well, so much the worse. She hasn't been deceived, not she, don't think it. You see that she staid up on the hill, and that she did not want to come with us. Oh! she understood, she understood!—"

He caught one of Louise Oriol's hands and gently kissed the ends of her fingers, courteously, murmuring:

"How nice you are! How nice you are!"

She leaned against the wall of lava, and heard her heart beating with excitement, but she said nothing. The only thought that floated through her troubled mind, was a thought of triumph: she had got the best of her sister.

But a shadow fell across the entrance of the grotto. Paul Bretigny was watching them. Gontran let the little hand fall that he held to his lips, in an easy way, and he said:

"Oh, here you are. Are you alone?"

"Yes, we were astonished to see you disappear under here."

"Well, we will come back, my dear fellow. We were examining this. Isn't it rather curious?"

Louise, blushing to her temples, went out first, and the young men followed her and talked together in low voices.

Christiane and Charlotte watched them come and waited for them, hand in hand.

They walked back towards the carriage, where

the Marquis had staid; and the Noah's Ark started on its way back to Enval.

Suddenly, in the midst of a little pine forest, the landau stopped, and the driver began to swear. A dead ass blocked their way. Everyone wanted to see, and got down. He was stretched out on the blackish dust, sombre-hued himself, and so thin that his worn skin, where the bones projected, seemed as though it would have been broken through by them, if the poor beast had not breathed his last. All the skeleton showed through the gnawed hair on his sides, and his head seemed enormous. The poor head, with closed eyes, was lying so tranquilly on the bed of broken stone, so peaceful in death, that it seemed surprised and happy at this new rest. The long ears hung down like rags. Two open wounds on his knees told how often he had fallen, even that very day, before he had sunk down for the last time. Another wound on his side showed the place where his master, for years and years, had prodded him with an iron spike fastened to the end of a stick, to hasten his slow gait.

The driver took hold of his hind legs, and dragged him towards a ditch. And his neck stretched out as if to bray once more, to utter one last plaint. When he was on the grass, the man muttered furiously:

"What brutes to leave that in the middle of the road!"

No one else had spoken; they got back into the carriage.

Christiane, heartbroken, overcome, saw all the pitiful life of the creature, that had ended thus on the roadside. First the happy little donkey, with his big head and great shining eyes, a comical and good-natured little fellow, with his rough hair and long

ears, gamboling about, still free, beside his mother. Then the first cart, the first uphill pull, the first blows! And then, and then, the incessant and terrible trips along the interminable roads! Blows! blows! Too heavy loads, overpoweringly hot suns! And for food, only a little straw, a little hay, some branches of leaves, and the tempting sight of the green meadows, all along the hard way.

And then later, as age came on, the iron spike replaced the supple switch, and the dreadful martyrdom of the worn-out creature, breathless, bruised, always dragging excessive loads, suffering in every limb, in all its old body, worn shabby as a beggar's coat. And then death, merciful death, three paces from the grass of the roadside ditch, to which a man who is passing drags him, swearing, to clear the road.

Christiane for the first time understood the misery of creatures that are enslaved. Death also seemed to her, at moments, very kind.

Suddenly they passed by a little cart that was dragged along by a man, nearly naked, a woman in tatters, and an emaciated dog, all exhausted with fatigue.

One could see how they were sweating and gasping. The dog, lean and mangy, with his tongue hanging out, was fastened underneath, between the fore wheels. In the little cart was wood gathered up from all over, stolen, no doubt, roots, stumps, broken branches that seemed to hide some other things. Then on top of the branches were rags, and lying on the rags was an infant—nothing but a face appearing out of the gray tatters, a round ball with two eyes, a nose, and a mouth!

And that was a family, a human family! The ass had succumbed to exhaustion, and the man, with-

out pity for his dead servant, without even pushing it as far as the rut, had left it in the middle of the road, in front of carriages that might come. Then, yoking himself up in his turn, with his wife in the empty shafts, they had begun to drag the cart as the animal had done just before. They were going on! Where? To do what? Had they even a few sous? That cart—would they drag it always, unable to buy another animal? On what would they live? Where would they stop? They would probably die as their donkey had died.

Were these beggars married or just living together? And their child would do as they did, that little brute, still unformed, that was hidden under the filthy cloths.

Christiane was thinking of all this, and new emotions surged in the depths of her startled soul. She caught a glimpse of the misery of the poor.

Gontran said, all at once:

"I don't know why, but I think it would be delightful for us to take dinner all together, at the Café Anglais. It would give me pleasure to see the boulevard."

The Marquis muttered:

"Bah! we are comfortable here. The new hotel is much better than the old."

They passed by Tournoël. A memory made Christiane's heart throb as she recognized a chestnut tree. She looked at Paul, but he had closed his eyes and did not see at all her meek appeal.

Ere long, they saw two men in front of the carriage, two vine-dressers, returning from their work, who carried their rakes on their shoulders, and walked with the long, weary step of laborers.

The Oriol girls blushed to their temples. It was their father and their brother, who had returned to

the vineyards, as of old, and passed their days sweating over the ground that had made them rich, and bent double, with the sun on their backs, they cultivated it from morning till night, while their fine frock coats, carefully folded, reposed in the bureau, and the tall hats in a closet.

The two peasants greeted them with a friendly smile, while those in the landau waved their hands in reply to their "Good evening."

As soon as they had returned, as Gontran was getting down from the Ark to go up to the casino, Bretigny went with him, and stopped him after the first few steps.

"Listen, my dear fellow, what you are doing is not right, and I have promised your sister to speak to you about it."

"To speak to me about what?"

"Of your way of behaving for the past few days."

Gontran assumed his insolent air.

"Of acting? Towards whom?"

"Towards that girl that you are casting off cruelly."

"You think so?"

"Yes, I think so—and I have reason to think so."

"Bah! you seem to have grown very scrupulous on the subject of jilting."

"But, my dear friend, it's not a question of a fast woman, but of a young girl."

"I know it very well, and for that reason I have not betrayed her. The difference is very marked."

They walked on, side by side. Gontran's manners exasperated Paul, who replied.

"If I were not your friend, I should say very harsh words to you."

"And I would not permit you to say them."

"Come, listen, my dear fellow, this child rouses my pity. She was crying a little while ago."

"Bah! she was crying? Well, that's flattering to me!"

"Look here, don't joke about this. What are you expecting to do?"

"I? Nothing."

"But think, you have gone so far as to compromise her. You said to us the other day, to your sister and me, that you were thinking of marrying her."

Gontran stopped, and said in a mocking tone, tinged with a threat:

"My sister and you would better not to occupy yourselves with the love affairs of others. I told you that I rather liked that girl, and that if I chanced to marry her, it would be a good and sensible act. That's all. Now it happens that to-day I liked the elder more. I've changed my opinion. That happens to everyone."

Then, looking Paul full in the face:

"What do you do yourself, when a woman no longer pleases you? Do you treat her kindly?"

Taken by surprise, Paul Bretigny tried to sound the deep meaning, the hidden meaning, of these words. His head, too, grew hot, and he said violently:

"Once more I say that it is not a question of a worthless woman, or of a married woman, but of a young girl, whom you have deceived, if not by promises, at least by your manner. That is not, do you understand, the part of a courteous man! nor of an honorable man!—"

Gontran, pale as death, with a breaking voice, exclaimed:

"Stop! You have already said too much—and

I have listened too long. In my turn, if I were not your friend I—I would show you that my temper is quick. One word more, and everything is finished between us forever."

Then, weighing his words slowly, and hurling them at Paul's face, he said:

"I have no explanations to give you—I might have more right to demand them from you. That which does not become a courteous man, nor an honorable man, is a certain indelicacy—which may have many forms—from which friendship should restrain certain people—and which love cannot excuse—"

Suddenly, changing his tone, and almost joking, he said:

"Now, as to this little Charlotte, if she touches your pity, and pleases you, take her and marry her. Marriage is often the solution of difficult situations. It's a solution and a stronghold, in which to barricade oneself against clinging despairs. She is pretty and rich! You will have to end with some such accident as that! It would be amusing for us to be married here, on the same day, for, as far as I am concerned, I shall marry the elder. I am telling you this as a secret; do not announce it yet. Meantime, do not forget that you, yourself, have less right than anyone to ever speak of honor in questions of sentiment and of qualms in those of love. And now go back to your affairs. I shall attend to mine. Good-night."

And abruptly changing the direction in which he was going, he went down towards the village. Paul Bretigny, full of doubt and anxiety, went back with slow steps towards the Mont-Oriol hotel.

He tried to really understand it, to recall every word so as to study and determine its meaning, and he wondered at the secret, unavowable, and shame-

ful winding ways that may lie hidden in some souls.

When Christiane asked him:

"What was Gontran's answer to you?"

He stammered:

"*Mon Dieu,* he—he prefers the elder, at present—I even believe that he wants to marry her. And in answer to my keen reproaches, he sealed my lips by allusions—alarming—to us both."

Christiane sank down in a chair, whispering:

"Oh! *Mon Dieu!—Mon Dieu—*"

But as Gontran just came in, for the dinner bell had rung, he gaily kissed her forehead, asking:

"Well, little sister, how are you? You are not too tired?"

Then he shook hands with Paul, and turned to Andermatt who had come in behind him, and asked:

"Tell me now, jewel of brothers-in-law, husbands, and friends, can you estimate for me exactly the price of an old ass, dead on the roadside?"

CHAPTER IV

AN ANNOUNCEMENT

ANDERMATT and Dr. Latonne were walking in front of the casino, on the terrace that was decorated with the imitation marble vases.

"He doesn't even bow to me any more," said the doctor, who was talking of his colleague, Bonnefille, "and he stays over there in his hole like a wild boar. I believe that he would poison our springs, if he could."

Andermatt, with his hands behind his back, his hat pushed back so far that it let the baldness be seen, was thinking. At length he said:

"Oh, in three months the company will have given in. We might have it at about ten thousand francs. It's this miserable Bonnefille who stirs them up against me, and makes them believe that I will yield. But he is mistaken."

"You know they have closed their casino. No one was left," said the new inspector.

"Yes, I know it, but we haven't enough people here, ourselves. They stay at the hotels too much, and in the hotels one gets bored, my dear friend. We must amuse the bathers, distract them, make them think the season here too short. The guests of our Mont-Oriol hotel come every evening because they are near, but the others hesitate and stay in their own

apartments. It's a question of routes of bringing them here, nothing else. Success hinges always on imperceptible causes, that one must know how to discover. It must be so arranged that the routes leading to a place of entertainment must themselves be pleasurable, an introduction to the pleasure that one is about to enjoy.

" The ways leading here are rough, stony, and hard; they fatigue the visitors. When a path to a certain place, where one wishes vaguely to go, is smooth, wide, shaded during the day, easy and not steep for the evening, one of necessity choses that path in preference to the others. If you realized that the body retains the memory of a thousand things that the mind has not taken the trouble to remember! I believe that this is the basis of the memory of animals! If you have ever suffered from the heat in going to a certain place. wearied your feet on badly broken stone, found an ascent too steep, even while you were thinking of something else, you will experience an unconquerable, physical repugnance to returning to that place. You were talking with a friend, you had not noticed at all the slight discomfort of the walk, you looked at nothing, you observed nothing. But your legs, your muscles, your lungs, your whole body has not forgotten it, and all say to your mind, when the mind wishes to take them back along the same path: ' No, I won't go, I suffered too much.' And the mind obeys this refusal without disputing it, and submits to this mute language of the companions who carry it about.

" Therefore we must have fine roads, which amounts to saying that I must have the lands of this donkey, Père Oriol. But patience—Ah! in this connection, Mas-Roussel has become the owner of his

châlet on the same conditions that we tendered Remusot. It's a slight sacrifice for which he will give us a large indemnity. Try to find out exactly what Cloche's intentions are."

"He will do the same as the others," said the doctor. But there is still a matter that I have been thinking over for some days, and that we have completely forgotten; it is the meteorological bulletin."

" What meteorological bulletin? "

" In the large Paris newspapers! It's indispensable! The climate of a hot springs resort must be better, less variable, more equable, than that of the neighboring, rival resorts. You subscribe to the weather report in the papers, and I will send every evening, by telegraph, the atmospheric conditions. I will arrange it so that the average, calculated at the close of the year, shall be better than the best averages of the surrounding resorts. The very first thing that strikes our eyes, on opening the big newspapers, is the temperature at Vichy, Royat, Mont-Doré, and Châtel-Guyon, during the summer season, and during the winter, that at Cannes, Menton, Nice, Saint-Raphaël. It must always be warm and lovely in those places, my dear sir, so that the Parisian will say: ' Christi, how lucky those people are who go down there! ' "

Andermatt exclaimed:

" *Sacrebleu*! you are right. How was it that I never thought of that? I will attend to it this very day. Talking of practical things, have you written to Professors de Larenard and Pascalis? Those are two that I should like very much to get here."

" Unapproachable, my dear President,—unless—unless they are assured independently, after many trials, that our springs are excellent. But with them,

persuasion will accomplish nothing—before the right time."

They passed by Paul and Gontran, who had come for coffee after lunch. Other bathers came in, chiefly men, for the women, when they rose from the table, always went to their rooms for an hour or two. Petrus Martel was superintending his waiters and shouted: "A kümmel, a small glass of brandy, an anisette," in the same deep, thundering voice that he would assume an hour later in conducting the rehearsal and giving the key-note to the actress who played the part of the heroine.

Andermatt stopped for several moments to talk with the young men, then he resumed his walk by the side of the inspector.

Gontran, with his legs crossed, his arms folded, was lolling back in his chair, resting his neck on the back, with his eyes and cigar pointed heavenward, and smoked, steeped in perfect happiness.

Suddenly, he asked:

"Would you like to take a trip, in a little while, to the valley of Sans-Souci? The girls will be there."

Paul hesitated, then after a moment's thought, he said:

"Yes, I'd like to go."

Then he added:

"Is your love affair going on all right?"

"*Parbleu*! I've caught her. She can't escape now."

Gontran had now made his friend his confidant, and told him day by day about his progress and success. He even got him to be present as an accomplice at their meetings, for he had arranged, very ingeniously, trysting-places with Louise Oriol.

After the excursion to the Puy de la Nugère Christiane put an end to trips, by hardly going

out at all, which made it very difficult to plan meetings.

Her brother, whose plans were at first upset by his sister's attitude, thought up ways of getting out of this difficulty.

Accustomed as he was to Parisian morals, where women are considered by men of his stamp as game which are often difficult to hunt, he had employed in the past many schemes to approach those whom he fancied. He knew better than any one how to use go-betweens, to find out those who would act through interested motives, and to sound with a glance the men or women who would be disposed to help him.

When Christiane's unconscious aid suddenly failed him, he looked about him for the needed connecting bolt, the "pliant character," as he said, to replace his sister. His choice fell at once on Dr. Honorat's wife. Many reasons pointed to her as the one. To begin with, her husband, who was very intimate with the Oriols, had attended this family for twenty years. He had been present when the children were born, dined with them every Sunday, and entertained them at his house every Tuesday. His wife, who was a fat old woman, of ordinary family, but very pretentious, and easily won through her vanity, would give every help to forward the wishes of the Count de Ravenel, whose brother-in-law was the owner of the establishment of Mont-Oriol.

Besides, Gontran, who was a good judge of go-betweens, felt sure by just seeing her pass by in the street, that she would naturally act the part. She has the right physical make up for it, he thought, and when one has the physical qualities for an employment, one has the mental as well.

So he had gone to see her one day, after he had walked home with her husband to his own door. He

sat down and chatted and complimented the lady, and when the dinner bell rang he said as he rose:

"What a savory smell! You have better cooking than at the hotel."

Madame Honorat, puffed up with pride, faltered:

"*Mon Dieu*—if I dared—if I dared, Monsieur le Comte."

"If you dared what, dear Madame?"

"To beg you to partake of our humble meal."

"*Ma foi—ma foi*—I would say, yes."

The doctor anxiously, muttered:

"But we have nothing, nothing: soup, beef, a chicken, that's all.

Gontran laughed.

"That's enough for me, I accept."

So he had dined with the Honorat family. The fat hostess rose, took the dishes from the hands of the servant so that the sauce should not be spilt on the tablecloth and, in spite of her husband's vexation, did all the waiting herself.

The Count congratulated her on her cooking, on her house, and admired her hospitality, and left her burning with enthusiasm.

He had gone again to make his dinner call, accepted a new invitation, and now was all the time at Madame Honorat's home, where the Oriol girls had been in the habit for many years of running in any moment, as neighbors and friends.

Thus it happened that he spent hours there with the three women, and was always kind to both sisters, but showed clearly from day to day, his marked preference for Louise.

The jealousy that had sprung up between the sisters from the moment that he had showed atten-

tions to Charlotte, took the form of spiteful revenge on the part of the elder, and of contempt on the part of the younger. Louise, in spite of her reserved air, threw into her reticence and her restrained manner that she showed towards Gontran, more coquetry and encouragement than the other had ever shown in moments of freest and most joyous gaiety. Charlotte, wounded to the heart, concealed her suffering through pride. She pretended to observe nothing, to understand nothing, and continued to go to all the meetings at Madame Honorat's with an air of great indifference. She did not want to stay at home for fear people would suspect that she was grieving, that she was crying, that she was surrendering her place to her sister.

Gontran, too proud of his cleverness to hide it, could not resist telling Paul. And Paul, who thought it very funny, had laughed. Besides, after the ambiguous remarks of his friend, he had made up his mind not to meddle in his affair, and often he wondered, anxiously: "Does he suspect anything about Christiane and me?"

He knew Gontran too well not to think him capable of winking at a intrigue of his sister's. But then, how was it that he had not allowed Paul to know sooner that he guessed it or knew it? Gontran in fact was one of those men who think that every society woman should have a lover or lovers, of those to whom the family is only an association for mutual help, to whom moral laws are only an indispensable cloak to veil the different desires that nature has implanted in us, and to whom worldly honor is only a façade, behind which one's amiable vices should lie hidden. Besides, if he had urged on his dear sister to marry Andermatt, was it not with the vague, or even clearly-planned, thought that this Jew could

be made use of in all sorts of ways by all the household. Perhaps he would have despised Christiane as much for being faithful to this husband of convenience and utility, as he would have despised himself for not borrowing money from his brother-in-law's purse.

Paul thought of all this, and it all troubled his Quixotic soul, which was otherwise disposed to be accommodating. Hence he become very reserved towards his enigmatical friend.

Then when Gontran told of what use he was putting Madame Honorat, Bretigny had laughed, and for some time he had even let himself be invited to her home, and took great pleasure in chatting with Charlotte.

The doctor's wife lent herself, with the best grace in the world, to the rôle that they made her play. She served them with five o'clock tea, like the ladies in Paris, and served them with little cakes made by her own hands.

The first time that Paul found his way to her house, she welcomed him like an old friend, made him sit down, relieved him of his hat, in spite of his protests, and put it on the mantel by the clock. Then, enormously big and fat, she bustled about from one to another, and asked with eager hospitality:

"Do you feel like a little bit of dinner?"

Gontran made nonsense, joked, and laughed with complete assurance. He detained Louise for several moments in the embrasure of a window, under the troubled eye of Charlotte.

Madame Honorat, who was talking with Paul, said to him in a motherly tone:

"These dear children come here to chat together for a little while. It is very innocent, isn't it, Monsieur Bretigny?"

" Oh! very innocent, Madame."

The next time he came, she called him familiarly, " Monsieur Paul," treating him a little like a crony.

After that Gontran told in his bright chaffing way of all her obliging help. He had said to the lady, the day before:

" Why do you never go out strolling with the young ladies on the Sans-Souci road? "

" Why, we will go, Monsieur le Comte, we will go."

" How about to-morrow, towards three o'clock? "

" To-morrow, at about three o'clock, Monsieur le Comte."

" You are very kind, Madame Honorat."

" I am at your service, Monsieur le Comte."

Gontran explained to Paul:

" You see, in this sitting-room, I can't say anything that's a little earnest to the elder before the younger. But in the woods I can either go on ahead or stay behind with Louise! Then you will come with us? "

" Yes, I'd like to very much."

" Let's start on."

They got up and stepped off very quietly along the main road, then, after passing through Roche-Pradière, they turned to the left and went down to the wooded dale through tangled thickets. When they had crossed the little brook, they sat down on the edge of the path and waited.

The three ladies came soon, walking in single file, Louise leading and Madame Honorat bringing up the rear. They appeared to be very much surprised on both sides at having met.

Gontran exclaimed:

" Well, what a happy thought you had to come this way! "

The doctor's wife replied:

"See, it was I who had that happy idea!"

And they continued their walk.

Louise and Gontran gradually hastened their pace, took the lead and got so far ahead that the others lost sight of them in the windings of the narrow path.

The fat lady, panting, murmured as she glanced towards them indulgently:

"Bah! they're young, they have good legs. For my part, I can't keep up with them."

Charlotte exclaimed:

"Wait, I'll call them back."

She started to run after them, but the doctor's wife detained her:

"Don't bother them, my dear, if they want to talk! It's not nice to interrupt them, they will come back of their own accord."

And she sat down on the grass under the shade of a pine, and fanned herself with her handkerchief. Charlotte cast a look of distress towards Paul, an imploring and despairing glance.

He understood, and said:

"All right, Mademoiselle, we will leave Madame here to rest, and we will rejoin your sister, we two."

She answered eagerly:

"Oh! yes, Monsieur."

Madame Honorat made no objection.

"Go on, children, go on. I'll wait for you here. Don't be too long."

And they went on by themselves in their turn. They walked rapidly, at first, not seeing the others and hoping to catch up to them. Then, after some minutes they decided that Louise and Gontran must have turned to the right or left and gone through the woods. Charlotte called in a trembling and re-

pressed voice. No one answered. She whispered: "Oh! *mon Dieu,* where are they?"

Paul felt himself overcome once more by that deep pity, that tender sympathy that had taken such hold on him before, on the edge of the crater of Nugère.

He did not know what to say to this poor child in such distress. He had a strong fatherly wish to take her in his arms and kiss her, and to think of sweet, comforting things to say to her. But what should he say? She turned to look on every side, peering through the branches wildly, and listening for the slightest sounds. She faltered:

"I think they are here.—No, over there. Do you hear nothing?—"

"No, Mademoiselle, I hear nothing. It is best to wait for them here."

"Oh! *Mon Dieu.*—No.—We must find them—"

He hesitated several moments, then he said very softly:

"Then this makes you very unhappy?"

She raised her distracted eyes, in which the tears began to gather, veiling them in a light, transparent mist, still held back by the lids, fringed with long, brown lashes. She tried to speak, but could not, dared not. Yet her swelling heart, repressed, and so full of grief, longed to unburden itself.

He went on:

"So you loved him very much.—He is unworthy of your love. Don't grieve."

She could control herself no longer, and hiding her tears with her hands, she sobbed:

"No—no—I don't love him—not that man—it's too cruel to act like that! He has played with my affection—it's too base—it's too cowardly—but all the same, it hurts me—very much—because it's hard

—very hard—oh! yes. But what grieves me worst of all—is my sister—my sister—who does not love me either—has been more unkind than he. I feel that she does not love me any more—not at all—that she hates me. I had only her. I have no one any more—and yet I have done nothing!—"

He saw only her ear and her fresh young neck, sinking into the collar of her dress, under the light material that she wore, and blending into the soft outlines of her breast. And he was overcome with compassion, and tenderness, carried away by that impetuous need of devotion that possessed him every time a woman touched his soul. And his soul, which was so ready to burst into enthusiasms, was stirred in the face of this innocent, distressing, artless, and cruelly charming grief.

He stretched his hand towards her with an unconscious gesture, such as one makes to fondle and soothe children, and put it on her shoulder. Then he could feel her heart throbbing, like the little heart of a bird one has caught. And this throbbing thrilled along his arm towards his own heart that then beat faster. He felt this rapid beating that came from her, pervading all his own body, muscles and nerves, making only one heart that grieved with the same sorrow, stirred with the same throbs and lived the same life, like those clocks that are connected at a distance by a thread, and made to keep together second by second.

But she took her hands from her flushed and tear-stained face, and drying her eyes quickly said:

"Come, I should not have spoken to you of this. —I am foolish. Let us go back quickly to Madame Honorat, and forget. Will you promise me?"

"I promise."

She gave him her hand.

" I have confidence in you. I believe that you are very honorable! "

They turned back. He lifted her to cross the stream as he had lifted up Christiane, last year. Christiane! How many times he had come with her along this path in the days when he adored her. He thought, wondering at the change in his own feelings, " What a short time it lasted, that passionate affection! "

Charlotte touched his arm with her finger, whispering:

" Madame Honorat is fast asleep, let us sit down without making any noise."

Madame Honorat was fast asleep, sure enough. She was sitting with her back against the pine tree, with her handkerchief over her face and her hands folded in her lap. They sat down a few steps away from her and did not speak for fear of waking her.

Then the stillness of the wood was so profound that it grew as painful to them as real suffering. One heard only the water rushing over the stones, a little further down, and then the almost imperceptible stirring of small insects passing through the air. The faint buzzing of flies, or sounds of large insects tipping over the dead leaves.

But where were Louise and Gontran? What were they doing? All at once, they were heard in the distance, far off; they were coming back. Madame Honorat woke and was surprised.

" Why, you're here! I did not hear you coming! And the others, did you find them? "

Paul answered:

" Here they are." And just then they were coming.

They recognized Gontran's laughter. This laugh-

ter relieved Charlotte of a weight of anxiety that had oppressed her mind, though she could not have told why.

Soon they came in sight. Gontran was almost running and was pulling Louise, who was full of blushes, along by the arm. And even before he had reached them he called out, so anxious was he to tell his story:

"You can't think whom we've surprised? I'll give you a thousand guesses. Handsome Dr. Mazelli with the daughter of the illustrious Professor Cloche, as Will would say, the pretty red-haired widow. Oh! yes, truly—surprised—think of it. Surprised. He was kissing her, the rascal. Oh! yes! Oh! yes!"

Madame Honorat, at his unrestrained merriment, made a dignified gesture:

"Oh! Monsieur le Comte—think of these young ladies!"

Gontran made a low bow.

"You are quite right, dear Madame, to recall me to the conventionalities. All your ideas are excellent."

Then, to avoid being seen going back together, the young men bowed to the ladies and went home through the woods.

"Well?" said Paul.

"Well, I've told her that I adore her and should be delighted to marry her."

"And she said?"

"She said with very graceful discretion: 'That concerns my father. I will give my answer to him.'"

"Then you will——"

"At once charge my ambassador, Andermatt, with the official proposal. And if the old boor makes a fuss, I will compromise the daughter by a scandal."

And as Andermatt was still talking with Dr. Latonne on the terrace of the Casino, Gontran separated them, and at once put his brother-in-law in possession of all the facts of the situation.

Paul walked along on the road to Riom. He needed to be alone, he felt so overcome with that agitation of mind and body which one feels at every meeting with a woman with whom one is about to fall in love.

For some time now he had been influenced, without realizing it, of the keen and fresh charm of this young girl who had been forsaken. He saw that she was so nice, so good, so simple-hearted, so upright, and so artless, that he was from the first touched with compassion, with that tender compassion that the sorrow of women always inspires in our hearts. Then, seeing her so often, he had allowed to take root in his heart that grain, that tiny grain of tenderness that they sow in us so quickly and that grows so large. And now, especially for the past hour, he began to feel in his mind the constant presence of the absent one which is the first sign of love.

He walked along the road, haunted by the memory of her glance, by the sound of her voice, by the lines of her face as she smiled or wept, by the way she walked, even by the color and fluttering of her dress.

And he said to himself: "I believe I am in love. I know myself of old. It's very annoying. Perhaps I had better go back to Paris. *Sacrebleu!* it's a young girl. I cannot have an intrigue with her."

Then he began to think of her as he had thought of Christiane, the year before. That this one, too, was different from all the women that he had known who were born and brought up in cities, different, too, from the young girls who are surrounded from infancy by the coquetry of their mothers or by that

which flaunts itself in the streets. She had none of the artificiality of the woman who designs to fascinate, nothing studied in her phrases, nothing conventional in her gestures, nothing that was not true in her glance.

Not only was she a young and pure being, but she had sprung from a primitive race. She was a true daughter of the soil, at the moment when she was about to become a woman of the city.

And he extolled her, pleading for her against the vague resistance that he still felt in his heart. Poetic characters of novels passed before his eyes, creations of Walter Scott, of Dickens, or of George Sand, excited still more his imagination that was always haunted by ideals of women.

Gontran described him thus: "Paul is a horse saddled with a Cupid on his back. When he throws him to the ground, another springs up in his place."

But Bretigny saw that night was falling. He had walked a long time. He went back.

As he passed by the new baths, he found Andermatt and the two Oriols, surveying and measuring the vineyards, and he saw from their gestures that they were discussing it with excitement.

An hour later Will walked into the sitting-room, where the whole family was gathered, and said to the Marquis:

"My dear father-in-law, I wish to tell you that your son, Gontran, will marry, in six weeks or two months, Mademoiselle Louise Oriol."

M. de Ravenel was startled.

"Gontran? You say?"

"I say that he will marry, with your consent, in six weeks or more Mademoiselle Oriol, who will be very rich."

Then the Marquis said simply:

" *Mon Dieu,* if he likes that, I am perfectly satisfied."

And the banker told of his dealing with the old peasant.

The moment he had been told by the Count that the young girl would consent, Andermatt wanted to gain at one interview the vine-dresser's sanction, without giving him time to think up any tricks.

So he hastened to his house, where he found him making out his accounts with great difficulty, on the end of a greasy piece of paper. Colosse aided him and added the numbers on his fingers.

As soon as they were all seated, Andermatt said:

" I would like very much to drink a glass of your good wine."

As soon as tall Jacques had returned bringing the glasses and a brimming jug, Andermatt asked whether Mlle. Louise had come home, then he begged that they would call her. As soon as she stood before him, he rose and with a low bow, said:

" Mademoiselle, will you look upon me at this time as a friend to whom one can confide everything. Yes, you will, I feel sure. Well, I am charged with a very delicate mission in regard to you. My brother-in-law, Count Raoul-Olivier-Gontran de Ravenel, is in love with you, for which I praise him, and he has charged me to ask you before your family, if you would consent to become his wife."

Taken by surprise, too, she cast a troubled glance at her father. Père Oriol, wildly looked at his son, his usual counselor, and Colosse stared at Andermatt, who resumed with a certain degree of pride:

" You understand, Mademoiselle, that I have only undertaken this mission with the promise of bringing an immediate answer to my brother-in-law. He is quite aware that he may not please you, and

in that case he will leave this place to-morrow, never to return. I know besides that you are sufficiently well acquainted with him, to say to me, who am simply acting for him, 'I consent,' or 'I do not consent.' ''

She bowed her head and, blushing, but firm, and faltered:

'' I consent, Monsieur.''

Then she ran away so quickly that she struck against the door in passing.

Then Andermatt sat down again, and pouring out a glass of wine for himself, in the peasants' style, he said:

'' Now, we will talk business.'' And without even admitting the possibility of any hesitation, he came to the question of the dowry, fortifying himself with the assurances that the vine-dresser had made to him three weeks before. He estimated Gontran's fortune at three hundred thousand francs, besides expectations, and he let it be understood that if a man like the Count de Ravenel consented to ask for the hand of the Oriol girl, who was a very charming person, it was indisputable that the young girl's family should recognize this honor by a money sacrifice.

Then the peasant, much disconcerted, but flattered, and almost disarmed, tried to defend his property. The discussion was long. A statement of Andermatt had, however, made it easy from the very beginning.

'' We do not ask for cash or for checks, only for lands, those that you have already pointed out to me as the dowry of Mademoiselle Louise, and a few additional that I will show you.''

The prospect of not having to pay out money, that money slowly amassed, that had come into the

house franc by franc, sou by sou, that good money, white or yellow, worn by rubbing against hands, purses, pockets, tables of cafés, deep drawers of old chests, that money whose ring told the stories of so many troubles, worries, fatigues, and of labor, so dear to the heart, the eyes, the fingers of the peasant, held more dear than the cow, the vineyard, the field, that money, often harder to sacrifice than life itself, —the thought of not having to see that go with his child, brought at once a great relief, a wish to conciliate, and a secret, suppressed joy to the soul of the father and his son.

Yet they disputed trying to keep a few more acres of ground. They spread out on the table a detailed plan of Mont-Oriol, and they marked one by one, with a cross, the parts given to Louise. It took an hour for Andermatt to capture the last two squares. Then that there might not be any deceit on either side, they walked to the places, taking the plan with them. Then they carefully compared all the plots marked with the crosses and checked them off.

But Andermatt was very uneasy, for he suspected that both the Oriols might deny when next they met part of their concessions, and would want to get back the ends of the vineyards, corners which were well-adapted to his projects, and he tried to find a sure and practical way of making their agreement conclusive.

An idea flashed through his mind that at first made him smile, then it struck him as good though odd.

"If you like," he said, "we will write all this down so as not to forget it later."

And when they returned to the village, he stopped at the tobacconist's to buy two stamped sheets of paper. He knew that the lists of the lands set down

on these legal pages, would acquire to the peasants' eyes an almost inviolable character because these pages would represent the law, which is always invisible and threatening, and is upheld by gendarmes, fines and prison.

Then he wrote on one sheet and copied it on the other: "Pursuant to the promise of marriage exchanged between Count Gontran de Ravenel and Mlle. Louise Oriol, M. Oriol, the father, assigns as a dowry to his daughter the lands designated below. ——" And he enumerated them carefully, with the numbers of the register of lands of the district.

And when he had dated and signed it, he made Père Oriol sign it, too, who in his turn stipulated that amount of the fiancé's fortune should be written down. Then he went to the hotel with the paper in his pocket.

Everyone laughed at his tale and Gontran more than all the rest.

Then the Marquis said to his son with an air of great dignity:

"We will go this evening, both of us, to call on this family, and I will myself renew the request first presented by my son-in-law, so that the affair may be more regular."

CHAPTER V

A SNARE OF FATE

GONTRAN was a model fiancé. He gave presents, with money from Andermatt's purse, and he went all the time to see the young girl, either at her own home or at Madame Honorat's. Paul, now nearly always went with him, to meet Charlotte, whom he decided after every visit he would never see again.

She had bravely resigned herself to her sister's marriage and she even spoke of it freely, without seeming to keep the least regret in her heart. Only her nature seemed a little changed, more serious, less frank. Bretigny, while Gontran was talking love to Louise in a low voice in a corner, permitting his heart to be flooded by this new love as by a rising tide. He realized it and he gave himself up to it, thinking: "Bah! when the time comes, I will run away, that's all." When he had left her, he would go to see Christiane, who now reclined in an easy-chair from morning till night. The moment that he passed the threshold, he felt nervous, irritated, prepared for all the little quarrels that rise from weariness. Everything she said, everything she thought, vexed him even before she had said it. Her look of suffering, her resignation, her glances of reproach and supplication caused angry words to rise to his lips, that he restrained himself from saying through

good breeding, and when he was in her presence he always saw before him the image that was constantly with him of the young girl whom he had just left.

When Christiane, grieved at seeing so little of him, overwhelmed him with questions how he spent his days, he made up stories to which she listened attentively, trying to discover if he was not thinking of some other woman. The lack of power that she felt to hold this man's affection, to pour into his heart a little of that love with which she was tortured, the physical impossibility of pleasing him, of giving herself to him, of winning him back by caresses—the fact that she could not win him back by affection, made her suspect everything without knowing where her fears should be fixed.

She vaguely felt that a danger was hovering over her, a great unknown danger. And she was jealous though in the dark, jealous of everything, of the women that she saw passing in the street without even knowing if Bretigny had even spoken to them.

She asked him:

"Have you noticed a very pretty woman, a rather tall brunette, that I saw a little while ago and who must have come recently?"

When he answered: "No, I do not know her," she at once suspected that he was telling a falsehood, turned pale and continued:

"Why, it's not possible that you haven't seen her, she looked to me very handsome."

He wondered at her insisting so.

"I assure you that I have not seen her at all. I will try to meet her."

She thought: "It's surely that woman." Some days, too, she was positive that he was secretly carrying on an intrigue and had brought some woman,

perhaps an actress, to the place. And she questioned everyone, her father, her brother, and her husband, about all the attractive young women that they knew at Enval.

If she could only have gone about to see for herself, and followed him, she would have felt a little reassured, but the almost complete quiet that she had to keep made her endure a perfect martyrdom. And when she talked to Paul, the mere sound of her voice revealed her suffering and intensified the nervous impatience he felt over this love affair that for him was ended.

There was only one subject on which he could now talk calmly with her. It was the approaching marriage of Gontran which gave him a chance to say Charlotte's name and to think aloud of the young girl. And he even experienced a strange, confused, inexplicable pleasure in hearing Christiane pronounce this name, and in hearing her praise the kindness and all the fine qualities of this girl, and in the pity she expressed for her, regretting that her brother had sacrificed her, and wishing that some man, some brave heart, would understand her, love her and marry her.

He said:

"Oh! yes, Gontran made a foolish mistake there. She is altogether charming, that little girl."

Christiane with no misgiving would repeat:

"Simply charming. She is a pearl! a piece of perfection!"

She would never have dreamt that a man like Paul could love a young girl and that some day he would marry. She only feared intrigues.

And from some strange feeling of sentiment, the praise of Charlotte from Christiane's lips assumed for him a great value, roused his love, urged on his

desire, and surrounded the young girl with an irresistible attraction.

One day as he was going with Gontran into Madame Honorat's to meet the Oriol girls there, they found Dr. Mazelli installed there and very much at home.

He stretched out his hands in welcome to the young men, with his warm, Italian smile that seemed to give his whole heart with every word and gesture.

Gontran and he had formed a familiar and idle friendship based on like affinities, hidden resemblances, on a sort of federation of instincts, much more than on true affection and trust.

The Count asked:

"And how about your handsome blonde of the Sans-Souci woods?"

The Italian smiled:

"Bah! we are very cool to one another. She is one of those women who offer everything and give nothing."

Then they fell into conversation. The handsome doctor put himself out a great deal for the young ladies, especially for Charlotte. He showed, in speaking to women constant adoration in his voice, his gestures, and his glance. His entire person from head to foot, said to them: "I love you!" with an eloquence of mien that invariably won them.

He had the graces of an actress, the light pirouettes of a ballet girl, the supple movements of a juggler, a whole science of natural and acquired fascination which he employed constantly.

Paul said sullenly, as he was returning with Gontran to the hotel:

"Why does that charlatan go to that house?"

The Count answered calmly:

"Does one ever know with these adventurers?

They are the kind of people who creep in everywhere. That fellow is probably tired of his wandering life, and of obeying the whims of his Spanish lady, whose valet he is rather than physician, and perhaps still more. He is hunting around. Professor Cloche's daughter was a good catch, but he has missed her, he says. The second Oriol girl would not be worth any less to him. He is trying, feeling about, smelling around, sounding. He would become part owner of the springs, would try to overthrow that imbecile Latonne, or in any event would establish here every summer an excellent practice that would continue through the winter—*Parbleu!* that's his plan; come, there's no doubt of it."

A dull rage, a jealous hatred awoke in Paul's heart.

A voice shouted, "Hey! Hey!" It was Mazelli who rejoined them.

Bretigny said to him with aggressive irony:

"Where are you running so fast, Doctor, one would think that you were in pursuit of fortune?"

The Italian smiled without stopping, but springing back a little he plunged, with the graceful movements of a mimic, both his hands into his pockets, turned them inside out, and showed that they were both empty, holding them out between his fingers by the edges of the seams. Then he said: "I haven't caught her yet."

And pivoting elegantly round on his toes, he rushed off like a man who is in a great hurry.

During the succeeding days he went again several times to Dr. Honorat's where he made himself useful to the three ladies by a thousand graceful little services, by the same tactful manners that he used no doubt towards the Duchess. He could do everything to perfection, from compliments to macaroni. He

was, besides an excellent cook, and kept free from spots by a blue servant's apron, and decked out in a chef's cap made of paper, and singing, in Italian, Neapolitan songs, he cooked with great dash without making himself appear ridiculous at all, but amused and charmed everyone down to the half-crazy maid who said: "He is a saint!"

His projects soon were clear and Paul doubted no longer that he was trying to win Charlotte's love.

He seemed to succeed. He was such a flatterer, so eager, so skilled in pleasing, that the young girl's face, when she saw him, expressed that contentment that shows the heart is glad.

Paul on his side, without being wholly conscious of it assumed a lover's attitude and posed as a rival. As soon as he saw the doctor with Charlotte, he drew near, and in his more direct way, strove to gain the young girl's affection. He displayed a frank, brotherly, devoted, affection that said to her with such sincere familiarity and so frankly that one could hardly think it an avowal of love: "Oh! come now, I am very fond of you!"

Mazelli, surprised at this unexpected rivalry, used all his charms, and when Bretigny—who was gnawed with jealousy, the unconscious jealousy that fills a man in the presence of every woman, even if he does not love her but only likes her, and who was naturally violent—grew aggressive and haughty, the other who was more pliant, always master of himself, answered with shrewdness, wit, and clever and mocking compliments.

It was a daily battle waged by both, without either, perhaps, having any well-defined plans. They would not give up, like two dogs that have hold the same game.

Charlotte had resumed her bright spirits, but she

showed a sharper kind of mischief, with something enigmatical, less sincere in her smile and glance. One would say that Gontran's desertion had taught her a lesson, prepared her for possible deceptions, made her alert and armed.

She manœuvered with her two lovers in a quick and clever way, saying whatever was fitting to each, without ever opposing one against the other, without letting one suppose that she preferred the other, laughing a little at this one before that one, and at that one before this one, giving each fair play without even seeming to take either seriously. But all this was done simply, like a school-girl and not like a coquette, with that mischievous air of young girls that sometimes makes them irresistible.

Yet Mazelli seemed suddenly to get the advantage. He seemed to have grown more intimate with her as if some secret understanding had been reached between them. As he chatted to her, he toyed with her parasol and the ribbon of her dress, which seemed to Paul an act of moral possession, and exasperated him so that he longed to box the Italian's ears.

But one day at Père Oriol's house, when Bretigny was talking with Louise and Gontran, but had his eye all the time on Mazelli who was telling Charlotte things in a low voice that made her laugh, he saw her blush and look so troubled that he did not doubt for a second that the other had spoken of love. She cast down her eyes, smiled no more, but listened attentively, and Paul, who felt on the verge of making an outburst, said to Gontran:

"Will you be so kind as to go out for five minutes with me?"

The Count excused himself to his fiancée and followed his friend.

As soon as they were on the road, Paul said:

"My dear fellow, at any cost we must prevent that miserable Italian from beguiling this poor girl who is defenseless against him."

"But what do you want me to do?"

"To warn her that he is an adventurer."

"Ha! my dear fellow, those matters don't concern me."

"After all, she will be your sister-in-law."

"Yes, but there is nothing that assures me positively that Mazelli has any wrong designs towards her. He is very attentive in just the same way to all women, and he has never done or said anything unsuitable."

"Well, if you won't take charge of it, I will attend to it myself, although it certainly concerns me less than it does you."

"So then you are in love with Charlotte?"

"I?—no—but I see clearly through this fellow's game."

"My dear friend, you are mixing yourself up in very delicate matters—and—unless you are in love with Charlotte?"

"No—I am not in love with her—but I am hunting down impostors, that's all."

"May I ask what you are planning to do?"

"To slap this fraud in the face."

"Why, the best way to make her fall in love with him. You fight, and whether he wounds you, or you wound him, he will become a hero in her eyes."

"Then what would you do?"

"In your place?"

"In my place."

"I would speak to the girl as a friend. She has great confidence in you. Well, I would tell her simply in a few words, what these parasites of so-

ciety are. You know very well how to say these things. You have eloquence. And I would make her understand,—first, why he is a follower of the Spanish lady; second, why he laid siege to Professor Cloche's daughter; and third, why, not having succeeded with that attempt, he is striving as a last resort to win Mlle. Charlotte Oriol."

"Why don't you do that, yourself, who will be her brother-in-law?"

"Because—because—because of what has passed between us—you see—I cannot——"

"That's true. I will speak to her."

"Do you want me to arrange a tête-à-tête for you right away?"

"Yes, *parbleu!*"

"All right, take a ten minute walk while I carry off Louise and Mazelli, and you will find the other girl all alone when you return."

Paul Bretigny strolled along the banks of the gorge of Enval and thought how he would commence this difficult conversation.

He found Charlotte Oriol alone in the cold, white-washed parlor of her father's house, and he said to her as he sat down near her:

"It was I, Mademoiselle, who asked Gontran to secure this interview with you."

She looked up at him with her clear eyes.

"Why, what for?"

"Oh! it isn't to pay you insipid compliments in the Italian fashion, it is to talk to you as a friend, a very devoted friend who owes you advice."

"Tell me what it is."

He treated the subject in an impersonal way relying on his own experience and her's to lead up gently to discreet but unmistakable phrases in regard to adventurers who seek their fortunes every-

where, making use with their professional adroitness of all simple-hearted and good people, men or women whose purses and hearts they explore.

She had grown a little pale and listened intently.

She asked:

"I understand and I don't understand. You are speaking of someone, of whom?"

"I am speaking of Dr. Mazelli."

At that she looked down, and for several moments made no reply, then she said in a voice that faltered:

"You are so frank that I will be the same. Since—since—since my sister's engagement, I have become a little—a little less stupid! And so I had already suspected what you have just been telling me—and I laughed in my sleeve at his coming here."

She had raised her face, and in her smile, in her arch glance, in her little *retroussé* nose, in the moist, shining gleam of her teeth showing between her lips, so much true gracefulness, light-hearted mischief, and charming frolicsome ways were revealed that Bretigny felt himself drawn towards her by one of those tumultuous transports that threw him, wild with rapture, at the feet of his latest love. And his heart bounded with joy because Mazelli was not the favored one. He then, he had triumphed, himself!

He asked:

"So you don't love him, then?"

"Who, Mazelli?"

"Yes."

She looked at him with eyes so full of disappointment that his presence of mind was all upset, he faltered in a supplicating voice:

"Oh—don't you love—anyone?"

She answered with downcast eyes:

"I don't know—I love those who love me."

He suddenly caught up both the young girl's

hands, and kissed them wildly. Then in one of those moments of impulse when the mind is maddened, when the words that fall from one's lips come rather from the excited body than from the wandering mind, he faltered:

"I love you, my little Charlotte, I myself, I love you!"

She quickly freed one of her little hands, laid it over his lips, and whispered:

"Say no more—I entreat you, say no more!—That would cause me too much sorrow if it were still another falsehood."

She stood up, he rose, caught her in his arms, and embraced her with transports of affection.

A sudden noise parted them. Père Oriol had just come in and he was staring at them with startled eyes. Then he cried:

"Ah, *bougrrre!* ah, *bougrrre*!—ah, *bougrrre!*—of a savage!"

Charlotte had fled, and the two men stood facing one another.

Paul, after some moments of distress, tried to explain himself.

"*Mon Dieu*—Monsieur—I have behaved—it is true—like a—"

But the old man did not listen. Rage, a furious rage possessed him and he advanced towards Bretigny, with clenched fists, repeating:

"Ah! *bougrrre* of a savage—"

Then when they were face to face, he seized him by the collar with both his knotted peasant's hands. But the other who was as large and strong with the superior skill that practice in athletic sports gives, freed himself from the peasant's grip with a single push and, holding him firmly against the wall, said:

"Listen, Père Oriol, it's not a time for us to

fight, but to have an understanding. I did embrace your daughter, it's true—I swear to you that it was the first time—and I swear to you, too, that I wish to marry her."

The old man whose physical violence had abated after the encounter with his adversary, but whose rage was not calmed, stammered:

"At! that's it! You want to steal my daughter, you want her money. *Bougrrre* of a deceiver—"

Then all that was in his heart escaped from him in many broken words. He could not console himself for the loss of the dowry promised to the elder, for his vineyards that would fall into the hands of these Parisians. He suspected now Gontran's need of money, Andermatt's shrewdness, and quite forgetting the unlooked for fortune that the banker had brought him, he poured out his venom and secret rancor on those evil-doers who no longer let him sleep in peace.

One would have thought that Andermatt, his family and friends came every night to rifle his house and to steal something from him, his lands, his springs, and his daughters.

And he hurled his reproaches in Paul's face, accusing him also of having designs on his property, of being a swindler, and of taking Charlotte so as to get his lands.

The other who soon grew impatient, shouted in his face:

"But I am richer than you, *nom d'un chien* of an old donkey. I would be giving money to you—"

The old man paused, incredulous, but attentive, and then in an appeased tone of voice he recommenced his accusations.

Paul now replied and explained his position. And believing that he was bound by the surprise for

which he alone was responsible he proposed to marry her without asking any dowry whatever.

Père Oriol shook his head, made him repeat, but could not understand it. To him Paul was still a fellow without a cent in the world, a miserable pauper.

And when Bretigny, exasperated, threw in his face the words:

"But I have more than a hundred and twenty thousand francs of income, you old idiot. Do you understand?—three millions!"

Suddenly the other asked:

"Would you write that down on a piece of paper?"

"Why, yes, I will write it down!"

"And will you sign it?"

"Certainly, I will sign it."

"On a sheet of notary's paper."

"Why, yes, on a sheet of notary's paper!"

Then he rose, and opening his chest of drawers, drew out two sheets stamped with the seal of the State. Then he looked up the contract which Andermatt had required from him some days before, and drew up an odd promise of marriage, on condition that three millions should be vouched for by the fiancé. To this Bretigny had to affix his signature.

When Paul got out of doors again, it seemed to him as if the world was no longer turning in the same direction. So then he was engaged, in spite of himself, in spite of her, by one of those chances, one of those tricks of circumstances, which close on you every way of escape. He muttered: "What a piece of folly!" Then he thought: "Bah! Perhaps I could not have found anyone better in the whole world." And in the bottom of his heart he felt happy at this snare of fate.

CHAPTER VI

STARTLING DEVELOPMENTS

THE morning of the day following was unlucky for Andermatt. As he arrived at the bathing establishment, he learnt that M. Aubry-Pasteur had died during the night of an attack of apoplexy, at the Grand Hotel. Besides the fact that the engineer had been very useful to him because of his scientific knowledge, his eager interest, and the affection that he had for the Mont-Oriol resort, which he considered almost as his daughter, it was very much to be regretted that an invalid who had come to fight against the tendency to congestion should have died of that very cause, while undergoing treatment, at the height of the season.

The banker, greatly agitated, walked back and forth in the absent inspector's office, thinking up ways in which another cause could be attributed to this calamity, imagining some accident that might have happened, a fall, the rupture of an aneurism, and he awaited impatiently the arrival of Dr. Latonne so that the death could be skillfully certified to in such a way that no suspicion could be roused as to the initial cause of the fatal accident.

The medical inspector came in suddenly with a pale face, and as he entered he asked:

"Do you know the deplorable news?"

"Yes, the death of M. Aubry-Pasteur."

" No, no, the flight of Dr. Mazelli with Professor Cloche's daughter."

Andermatt felt a cold chill run over him.

" What?—You say—"

" Oh! my dear sir, it's a dreadful catastrophe, a crushing blow."

He sat down and wiped his brow, then he told the facts as he had them from Petrus Martel who had gleaned them directly from the professor's valet.

This Mazelli had ardently courted the pretty red-haired widow, who was a coarse coquette, a fast woman, whose first husband had died of consumption. But M. Cloche who had winnowed out the schemes of the Italian doctor, and did not wish to have this adventurer as his second son-in-law, kicked him out-of-doors when he found him on his knees before his daughter.

Mazelli who had gone out of the door, soon came back through the window by the silken ladder of lovers. There were two versions current. According to the first, he had made the professor's daughter mad with love and jealousy. According to the second, he had continued to see her secretly, while seeming to be devoting himself to another woman. Then learning at length through his sweetheart that the professor would remain inflexible, he had carried her off that very night, and so by this scandal, made a marriage inevitable.

Dr. Latonne rose and leaned up against the mantel while Andermatt, cast down, continued walking back and forth. Then the doctor exclaimed:

" For a doctor, Monsieur, a doctor, to do such a thing!—a doctor of medicine!—what a lack of character!—"

Andermatt disconsolately, reckoned up the con-

sequences, grouping and weighing them as one makes an addition. They were:

First, the unfortunate report that was spreading through the neighboring hot springs resorts as far as Paris. However, by manipulating it right, this elopement might serve as an advertisement. A fortnight's echoes well-worded in large print in the newspapers would draw attention strongly to Mont-Oriol.

Secondly, the departure of Professor Cloche, an irreparable loss.

Thirdly, the departure of the Duchesse and the Duc de Ramas-Aldaverra, a second inevitable loss, without possible compensation.

Summing it up, Dr. Latonne was right. It was a frightful catastrophe.

Then the banker, turning to the doctor, said.

"You must go at once to the Grand Hotel and draw up a certificate of death of Aubry-Pasteur, in such a way that no one will suspect a congestion."

The doctor took up his hat again, then, as he was going, he said:

"Ah! still another piece of news that is going the rounds. Is it true that your friend, Paul Bretigny, is going to marry Charlotte Oriol?"

Andermatt started with surprise.

"Bretigny? Oh, come!—who told you that?"

"Why, as usual, Petrus Martel, who got it from Père Oriol himself."

"From Père Oriol?"

"Yes, from Père Oriol, who affirms that his future son-in-law is worth three millions."

William did not know then what to think. He murmured:

"Well, it's possible, he has been rather taken with her for some time past!—Why, then—all the

knoll is ours—all the knoll!—Oh, I must find out at once if it is true!"

And he followed the doctor out of the office so as to see Paul before lunch.

As he went into the hotel, he was told that his wife had asked for him several times. He found her still in bed, talking with her father and her brother, who was glancing quickly over the newspapers with a distracted air.

She felt miserable, very miserable and restless. She was anxious without knowing why. Then a growing anxiety assailed her. She wished to consult Dr. Black. As a result of hearing jokes around her about Dr. Latonne, she had lost all confidence in him and she wanted other advice, she wanted Dr. Black's whose success was constantly increasing. Fears, all the haunting fears that torture women in her advanced condition, besieged her from morning till night. After a terrible dream, in which it seemed necessary that the Cæsarean operation should be performed, she was constantly haunted by thoughts of the most horrible details of such an operation. Then she felt that Dr. Black, alone, could tell her the truth about her condition, and she wanted him immediately, she insisted that he should examine her instantly, instantly, instantly!

Andermatt, greatly troubled, did not know what to answer.

"But, my dear child, it's very difficult to arrange, considering my relations with Latonne.—It is—even—impossible. Listen, I have an idea. I will go for Professor Mas-Roussel who stands a hundred times higher than Black. He won't refuse to come."

But she insisted. She wanted to see Black, no one but he. She needed to see him, to see his big

bulldog head near her. It was a longing, a wild, superstitious longing. She must have him.

Then William tried to change the current of her thoughts.

"You don't know that that intriguing Mazelli eloped last night with Professor Cloche's daughter? They have vanished, gone off no one knows where. Here's a fine story!"

She raised herself on her pillow, her eyes wide with pity, and she faltered:

"Oh! the poor Duchess—the poor woman, how I pity her."

For some time past her heart had sympathized with this bruised and passionate soul! She suffered the same grief and shed the same tears.

But she resumed:

"Listen, Will, bring Monsieur Black to me. I feel that I shall die unless he comes!"

Andermatt took her hand, and kissing her tenderly said:

"Look, my little Christiane, be reasonable—try to understand—"

He saw the tears in her eyes, then he turned to the Marquis.

"You are the one who must do this, my dear father-in-law, I can't myself. Black comes here every day at about one o'clock to see the Princess of Maldebourg. Stop him in the hallway and have him come to your daughter's room. You can wait for an hour, can't you Christiane?"

She agreed to wait an hour, but refused to lunch with the gentlemen, who went along to the dining-room.

Paul was there already. Andermatt exclaimed the moment that he saw him:

"Ah! come, what's this they've just been telling

me? Are you going to marry Charlotte Oriol? It isn't true, is it? "

The young man answered in a low voice, with an anxious glance towards the closed door:

" *Mon Dieu,* yes! "

As none of the others had known this before, all three stood in amazement, staring at him.

William asked:

" What's got into you? You to marry, with your fortune? You to bind yourself with one woman, when you have all? And then the family is not all that might be asked for as regards social position. It's all right for Gontran, who hasn't a cent! "

Bretigny burst out laughing.

" My father made his fortune in flour, he was a miller—a wholesale miller. If you had known him, you might also have said that he lacked cultivation. As to the young girl——"

Andermatt interrupted:

" Oh! perfectly charming—lovely—and—you know—she will be as rich as you—if not richer—I'll answer for that, I'll answer for that! "

Gontran muttered:

" Yes, this marriage will interfere with nothing, and it covers retreats. Only he should have warned us it was coming. How in the world did the affair come about, my dear fellow? "

Then Paul told the whole story, with a few embellishments. He told of his doubts, which he enlarged on, and of his sudden decision when a word from the young girl had revealed to him that she loved him. He told of Père Oriol's unlooked for entrance into the room, of their quarrel, which he exaggerated, the peasant's doubts in regard to Paul's fortune, and of the

officially stamped paper that he had taken from the chest.

Andermatt, laughing till the tears came, struck the table with his fist.

" Ah! he copied that, the scheme of the stamped paper. That's my invention, that trick."

Then Paul faltered, blushing a little:

" I must beg you not to tell this news yet to your wife. Considering our terms of friendship, it would be more suitable for me to tell her myself."

Gontran looked at his friend with an odd yet kindly smile, that seemed to say: " This is all right, coming out all right, perfectly right. This is the way such affairs should end, without scandal, without gossip, without tragedies."

He suggested:

" If you like, Paul, old fellow, we will go up together after lunch, when she will be sitting up, and you can tell her of your decision."

Their eyes met, looked steadily at one another, filled with unfathomed thoughts, then glanced away.

And Paul replied with an air of indifference:

" Yes, gladly, we will talk it over later."

A servant from the hotel came in to say that Dr. Black had just arrived to call on the Princess, so the Marquis went out to catch him in the hall.

He explained the situation to the doctor, the embarrassing position in which his son-in-law was placed, and his daughter's wish. Then he carried him off without resistance.

As soon as the little man with the big head entered the room Christiane said:

" Leave us, papa."

And the Marquis withdrew. Then she told the doctor all her anxieties, all her fears, her nightmares, in a low, sweet voice, as if she were making

a confession. And the doctor listened as a priest might, looking at her from time to time with his great round eyes, showing his attention by a little nod of his head, murmuring: "That's it." This seemed to say: "I have your case at my finger-ends and I can cure you when I am ready."

When she had finished talking, he began in his turn to ask her very detailed questions as to her life, her habits, her diet, and her treatment. Sometimes he appeared to approve with a gesture, sometimes to censure with an "Oh!" full of reserve. When she expressed her great fear that all might not be right, he rose and, with the modesty of a priest, lightly passed his hand over the covering and said: "No, all is well."

She longed to embrace him. What a fine man this doctor was!

He took a leaf of paper from the table and wrote a long prescription. It was long, very long. Then he came to her bedside, and in different tone of voice, so as to show clearly that he had finished his sacred professional duty, he began to chat with her.

He had a deep, oily voice, the powerful voice of a dumpy dwarf, and hidden meanings lay in his most ordinary words. He talked on all sorts of subjects. Gontran's engagement seemed to interest him greatly. Then, with the malicious smile of the deformed, he said:

"I have told you nothing of Monsieur Bretigny's engagement, although it is no longer a secret, for Père Oriol tells it to everyone."

She felt a faintness that commenced at her finger tips and spread over her whole body. She had not quite grasped the news, yet a dreadful fear of not learning the truth made her suddenly cautious, and she faltered:

"Ah! Père Oriol tells it to everyone?"

"Yes, indeed. He talked to me myself about it not ten minutes ago. It seems that Monsieur Bretigny is very rich and that he has loved little Charlotte for a long time. Then, besides, Madame Honorat has brought about these two engagements. She devoted her time and hospitality to the meetings of the young people——"

Christiane had closed her eyes. She was unconscious.

At the doctor's call, a chambermaid rushed in, then the Marquis, Andermatt, and Gontran, who went for vinegar, ether, ice, and twenty different things all equally useless.

Suddenly the young woman stirred, opened her eyes, raised her arms, and uttered a piercing cry as she writhed in bed. She tried to speak, faltering:

"Oh! how I suffer—*mon Dieu*—how I suffer! What agony—oh! *mon Dieu*—" And she commenced to scream again.

The symptoms of accouchement were quickly recognized.

Then Andermatt rushed for Dr. Latonne, whom he found finishing his lunch.

"Come quickly—my wife is taken suddenly ill—hurry."

Then he thought of a way to explain how Dr. Black had been found in the hotel when she was first taken.

Dr. Black himself confirmed this untruth to his colleague, he said:

"I was just going in to see the Princess, when I was told that Madame Andermatt was ill. I hastened to her. It was time!"

But William, greatly affected, his heart beating fast and his mind full of anxiety, was seized with

sudden doubts as to the skill of the two men. So he rushed out again, bare-headed, to run to Professor Mas-Roussel and begged him to come. The professor at once consented, buttoned up his frock coat with the mechanical manner of a physician starting out on his rounds, and strode off hurriedly with the long, eager strides of an eminent man whose presence may save a life.

The moment he entered, the two others, full of deference, asked his advice with respect, saying in chorus or nearly at the same time: "This is what has occurred dear Master—Don't you think, dear Master?—Isn't it likely, dear Master?"

Andermatt, wild with anguish at the moanings of his wife, in his turn harassed M. Mas-Roussel with questions, and also called him constantly, "dear Master."

Christiane saw nothing, knew nothing, and understood nothing any longer. In her great suffering, every thought had fled from her mind. Her anguish became every moment more and more frightful.

One thought at moments took possession of her soul, more cruel, more keen, more terrible than the physical suffering: "He loved another woman, whom he would marry."

She welcomed the physical agony that drove this thought from her mind. Then at least she could not think.

For fifteen hours she endured this martyrdom, so crushed with pain and with despair that she longed to die, that she strove to die.

At last it was over. They spoke to her, and she answered in a very low, weak voice.

Then Andermatt bent his face down close to hers and said:

"She will live—it is a girl."

Christiane could only murmur:

"Ah! *mon Dieu!*"

So she had a child, a living child, who would grow up—a child of Paul's! She longed to scream again, so terribly did this new grief crush her heart. She had a daughter! She did not want it! She would never touch it!

They had tenderly kissed her! Who? Her father and her husband, no doubt. She did not know. But he, where was he? What was he doing? How happy she would have felt at that moment if he had still loved her!

The time dragged on, the hours followed one another without her distinguishing even day from night, for she was conscious only of the one thought that burned into her soul. He loved another woman.

All at once, she thought: "Suppose it is not true? How could it be possible that I would not have known of his engagement before this doctor did?"

Then she reflected that they had concealed it from her. Paul had taken care that she should not know of it.

She looked around her room to see who was there. A woman who was a stranger sat near her, an ordinary-looking woman. Christiane did not dare to ask her any questions. Whom could she ask about this?

Suddenly the door was pushed open. Her husband entered on tip-toe. When he saw that her eyes were open, he went up to her:

"Are you better?"

"Yes, thank you."

"You have given us a great deal of anxiety since yesterday. But now the danger is over. I

telegraphed to our friend, Madame Icardon, begging her to come and be with you, but she is with her nephew who has scarlet fever. Yet you mustn't be with no one near you, without a woman who is somewhat congenial. And a lady here has offered to take care of you and bear you company every day, and, *ma foi!* I have accepted her offer. She is Madame Honorat."

Christiane suddenly remembered what Dr. Black had said. She shrank back and moaned:

"Oh! no, no—not she—not she!"

William did not understand, and resumed:

"Now, listen, I know that she is very ordinary, but your brother likes her very much, and she has been very helpful to him. Then, too, they say that she was formerly a nurse whom Honorat met while she was caring for an invalid. If you don't like her I will get her to leave the next day. Let us try her at least. Let her come once or twice."

She lay still, thinking. Such a fierce longing to know the truth, to know the entire truth, filled her mind, that the hope of getting this woman to chatter, so that she might snatch from her one by one the words that would rend her heart, made her now feel like answering:

"Go—go and find her at once—at once. Go quickly!"

And to this irresistible desire to know the truth was added a strange wish to suffer more, to roll as it were on the thorns of her misery—the strange, morbid desire of the martyr who in his ecstasy welcomes pain.

Then she faltered:

"Yes, I am quite willing, bring Madame Honorat to me."

Then all at once she felt that she could not wait

a moment longer without being sure, perfectly sure, of this treason, and she asked William in a voice that was faint as a breath:

"Is it true that Monsieur Bretigny is going to be married?"

He replied calmly:

"Yes, it's true. We would have told you before if we could have spoken to you."

She went on:

"To Charlotte?"

"To Charlotte."

But William now had a fixed idea, too, that never left him again: his daughter, hardly yet alive, but whom he went to look at every instant. He was indignant that Christiane's first words had not been to ask for the baby, and in a tone of gentle reproach he said:

"Why, come, you haven't asked yet for the little one. Do you know that she is getting on very nicely?"

She shuddered as if he had touched an open wound, but she must pass through all the stations of this Calvary.

"Bring her to me," she said.

He disappeared at the foot of the bed behind the curtain, then he came back with his face all lighted up with pride and happiness, and held in his hands, in an awkward way, a bundle of white linen.

He placed it on the embroidered pillow, close to Christiane's head, who was choking with emotion, and he said:

"Look, see how beautiful she is!"

She looked on.

Now he drew back with two fingers the soft laces that veiled the little red face, so tiny, so red, with closed eyes, and mouth slightly stirring.

And she thought as she bent over this beginning of a human life: "It is my daughter—Paul's daughter. This, then, is what has made me suffer so. This —this—this—is my daughter!"

Her repulsion for this child whose birth had so cruelly torn her poor heart and tender body with anguish suddenly disappeared. She now looked at it with burning and painful curiosity, with profound astonishment, the astonishment of an animal that looks at its first-born.

Andermatt was expecting that she would caress it passionately. He was again surprised and shocked and asked:

"Aren't you going to kiss it?"

She leaned very gently towards the little red forehead, and in proportion as her lips approached she felt them drawn, called by the child. And when she had placed them on the child's, when she had touched it, a little moist, a little warm, warm with her own life, it seemed as if she could never take her lips away from that baby's soft flesh and that they would stay there forever.

Something brushed against her cheek. It was her husband's beard, who was leaning down to kiss her. And when he had tenderly and gratefully embraced her, he wanted in his turn to kiss his daughter, and with his outstretched mouth he gave it very soft little pecks on its nose.

Christiane, her heart shrinking at this caress, looked at them beside her, her daughter and him—and him!

Soon he wanted to carry the baby back to its cradle.

"No," she said: "Leave it a few minutes longer, that I may feel it near my face. Don't talk any more, don't move about, leave us and wait."

She passed her hand over the little body hidden in wrappings, laid her forehead close to the small grinning face, closed her eyes, and lay still without thinking of anything.

But William, at the close of a few minutes, touched her shoulder softly: "Come, my darling, you must be reasonable! no emotions, you know, no emotions!"

Then he carried off their daughter, whom the mother followed with her eyes until she vanished behind the curtain of the bed.

After he came back, he said:

"Then it's understood that I am to send Madame Honorat to-morrow morning to keep you company."

She answered in a firm voice:

"Yes, my dear, you may send her to me to-morrow morning."

She stretched herself out on her bed, exhausted, worn out—but was she perhaps a little less unhappy?

Her father and her brother came in the evening to see her and told her all the news of the place: the sudden departure of Professor Cloche in search of his daughter, the guesses as to the whereabouts of the Duchess of Ramas, whom no one had seen since and who was supposed to have also gone in search of Mazelli. Gontran laughed over these adventures and drew an amusing moral from the events.

"These hot springs resorts," he said, "pass belief. They are the only fairy-lands that exist in the world! In two months more things happen there than in the rest of the universe during the remainder of the year. One might truly say that the springs are not mineralized but bewitched. And it is the same thing everywhere, at Aix, Royat, Vichy, Lu-

chon, and at the sea-bathing resorts, too, at Dieppe, Etretat, Trouville, Biarritz, Cannes and Nice. One meets there samples of people of all classes of society, a mixture of races and people that could be found nowhere else, and prodigious adventures. The women are ready for larks with ease and delightful quickness. At Paris one resists, at the springs one falls! Some men make fortunes there like Andermatt, others find death, like Aubry-Pasteur, still others meet with worse than that—and get married —like me—and like Paul. Isn't that a stupid and funny thing to do? You know about Paul's engagement, don't you? "

She murmured:

" Yes, William told me about it a little while ago."

Gontran went on:

" He is right, perfectly right. She is a peasant's daughter. Well, what of that? She is worth more than the daughter of adventurers, or an adventuress pure and simple. I know Paul. He would have ended by marrying an adventuress if she had resisted him for six weeks. And to have resisted him would have taken either a jade or an innocent. He has happened on the innocent. So much the better for him."

Christiane listened, and every word that entered her ears sank into her heart, and hurt her, hurt her cruelly.

She closed her eyes and said:

" I am very tired. I would like to rest a little."

They kissed her and went out.

She could not sleep, her thoughts were so roused, so restless and racking. The idea that he did not love her any more, not any more at all, became so unbearable to her, that if she had not seen the

woman, the nurse, who was drowsing in an armchair, she would have risen, opened her window and thrown herself down on the steps of the hotel. A very fine ray of moonlight came through an opening in her curtains and rested on the floor as a little, round, bright spot. She saw it, and all these memories assailed her together: the lake, the wood, the first "I love you," scarcely heard, it was so thrilling, and Tournoël, and all their caresses, in the evening, on the shadowy ways, and the road to La Roche-Pradière. Suddenly she saw that white road, on a star-lit night, and he, Paul, with his arms around a woman's waist and kissing her lips at every step. She recognized her. It was Charlotte! He drew her close to him, smiling as he knew how to smile, whispered in her ear the words so sweet that he knew how to say, then he threw himself on his knees and kissed the ground before her as he had kissed it before Christiane! This was so hard, so hard for her to bear that, turning and hiding her face in her pillow, she commenced to sob. She almost shrieked, so cruelly did this despair strike upon her soul.

Each beat of her heart, that leaped to her throat, that surged to her temples, flung to her this word: "Paul—Paul—Paul," in endless repetition. She stopped her ears with her hands so that she might hear it no longer, buried her head under the covers, but the name rang out then in the depths of her breast with every beat of her heart that could not be appeased.

The nurse was awakened, and asked her:

"Are you worse, Madame?"

Christiane turned around, her face stained with tears, and murmured:

"No, I was sleeping, I was dreaming—I was frightened."

Then she begged her to light two candles so that she should not see any longer the ray of moonlight.

Yet towards morning she fell asleep.

She had slept several hours when Andermatt came in, bringing with him Madame Honorat. The fat lady, who made herself at home at once, sat down by the bedside took the invalid's hands, questioned her as a doctor might, then satisfied with her replies, she said: " Come, come, that's all right." Then she took off her hat, her gloves and shawl, and turning to the nurse, said:

" You can go now, my girl. Come when we ring for you."

Christiane, who was at once filled with dislike towards this woman, said to her husband:

" Give me my daughter for a little while."

As on the day before, William brought the baby, kissing it tenderly, and laid it on the pillow. And she also, as on the day before, when she felt the warmth of the little strange body coming through the wrappings, against her cheek, was suddenly pervaded by a beneficent calm.

Suddenly the little one began to cry. She wept in a shrill and piercing tone. " She is hungry," said Andermatt. He rang, and the wet-nurse came in. She was an enormous red-faced woman, with the mouth of an ogress, full of large shining teeth that almost frightened Christiane, who felt a longing to snatch back the baby.

Madame Honorat meanwhile gave instructions to the wet-nurse, who went out of the room, taking the baby with her.

Andermatt went out in his turn. The two women were left alone.

Christiane did not know how to speak of that which was torturing her soul. She was fearful of

showing too much agitation, of losing her head, of weeping, of betraying herself. But Madame Honorat began to gossip of her own accord without being asked any questions. When she had told about all the scandals that were going the rounds of the place, she came to the Oriol family.

"They are good people," she said, "very good people. If you had known the mother, what a true, brave woman she was! She was worth ten, Madame. The girls take after her, too."

Then, as she was broaching another subject, Christiane said:

"Which of the two do you like best, Louise or Charlotte?"

"Oh! I, Madame, I like Louise best, your brother's choice. She is more judicious, more steady. She is an orderly woman! But my husband likes the other best. The men, you know, have their tastes, which are not like ours."

She was silent. Christiane, whose courage was weakening, faltered:

"My brother often met his fiancée at your house."

"Oh! yes, Madame, I should think so, every day. Everything was arranged at my house, everything! For my part, I let them talk together, these children, I understood it all, perfectly! But what gave me pleasure, really, was when I saw that M. Paul was considering the younger one."

Then Christiane, in a voice that could hardly be heard, murmured:

"Does he love her devotedly?"

"Ah! Madame, does he love her! He had lost his head over her lately. Then when the Italian, the one who took Professor Cloche's daughter, was hanging around the girl a little, it was just like a

story to see and to feel. I thought that they would fight. Ah! if you had seen Monsieur Paul's eyes! And he looked at her as though she herself were a holy Virgin.—It's a happiness to see love like that! ''

Then Christiane asked her questions about everything that had happened in her presence, what they had said, what they had done, about their walks in the valley of Sans-Souci—where so often he had told her of his love. She asked unexpected questions that surprised the fat lady, about things that no one would have thought of, for she was constantly comparing, she recalled a thousand details of the past year, all Paul's refined courtesies, his thoughtfulness, his ingenious inventions to please her, all the display of charming attentions and tender care that shows a man's imperious desire to fascinate. And she wanted to know if he had done all this for the other woman, if he had recommenced this siege of a heart with the same ardor, the same enthusiasm, and the same irresistible passion.

And every time that she recognized a little act, a little trait of his, one of those pretty nothings, one of those thrilling surprises that cause a throbbing of the heart, and of which Paul was so prodigal when he was in love, Christiane, lying on her bed, uttered a low '' Ah! '' of pain.

Madame Honorat, astonished by this odd exclamation, declared more emphatically:

'' Why, yes. It is as I tell you, just as I tell you. I never saw a man so much in love as he.''

'' Does he recite poetry to her? ''

'' Indeed he does, Madame, and very pretty poetry, too.''

And when they both were silent, one heard only the sweet, monotonous lullaby of the nurse as she rocked the child to sleep in the next room.

Steps approached in the hall, and MM. Mas-Roussel and Latonne were coming to see their patient. They found her excited and not quite so well as on the day before.

When they had gone, Andermatt opened the door again, and said, without coming in:

"It's Doctor Black, who wants to see you. Will you see him?"

She raised herself up in the bed and cried:

"No—no—I do not want to—no!"

William came in, amazed:

"Why, but listen—it is right—we owe it to him—you should——"

Her eyes were so widely open and her lips trembled so that she looked as if she had lost her reason. She cried again in a high voice, so loud that it pierced the walls:

"No—no—never! He must never come—you understand—never!"

And then no longer knowing what she was saying, she pointed with her outstretched arm to Madame Honorat, who was standing in the middle of the room:

"Nor her either—drive her away—I don't want to see her—drive her away!"

Then he rushed to his wife, took her in his arms, and kissed her brow.

"My little Christiane, be calm. What is the matter? Now, be calm!"

She could not speak. Tears gushed from her eyes.

"Make them all go away," she said, "and stay alone with me."

He hastened, distractedly, towards the doctor's wife, and, pushing her gently to the door, said:

"Leave us a few moments, I beg you. She is

feverish. I will soothe her. I will look for you again soon."

When he returned to the bed, Christiane had lain down again, and, prostrated, was quietly weeping. And for the first time in his life he wept also.

During the night she grew very feverish and delirium followed.

After some hours of great excitement, the patient began suddenly to talk.

The Marquis and Andermatt, who wanted to be near her and were playing cards, counting the tricks in hushed voices, thought that she had called them and started up and went to her bedside.

She did not see them, or did not recognize them. Very pale against her white pillow, with her fair hair hanging over her shoulders, she was gazing with her clear blue eyes at the unknown, mysterious, and fantastic world, in which madmen live.

Her hands, stretched out on the covers, sometimes stirred, and were agitated with sudden, involuntary movements, startings and tremblings.

She did not seem at first to be talking to anyone, but to be seeing and telling about things. And what she said seemed disconnected, unintelligible. She found a rock too high to jump from. She feared a sprain, and then she did not know well enough the man who was holding out his arms to her. Then she spoke of perfume. She seemed to be seeking for forgotten phrases: "What is there sweeter? That intoxicates like wine? Wine intoxicates the mind, but perfume intoxicates the fancy. In perfume one tastes the very essence, the pure essence of things and of the world—one tastes the flowers—the trees—the grass of the fields—one can distinguish even the soul of the homes of olden days, that

lies sleeping in the old furniture, the old carpets, and the old curtains——"

Then her face became drawn, as if she had undergone long-continued fatigue. She was laboring up a hill, slowly, heavily, and saying to someone: "Oh! carry me again, I beg you, I shall die here! I can walk no further. Won't you carry me as you used to above the gorges? Do you remember—how you loved me!"

Then she uttered a cry of anguish. A look of horror crossed her eyes. She saw a dead animal in front of her and begged that they would take it away from there without paining her.

The Marquis said very low to his son-in-law:

"She is thinking of an ass that we came across on our way back from La Nugère."

Now she was talking to the dead animal, comforting it, assuring it that she herself was also very unhappy, much more unhappy, because she had been forsaken.

Then suddenly she refused to do something that was required of her. She cried: "Oh! no, not that! Oh! it is you—you—who wish me to drag that cart!"

Then she panted as if she were really dragging along a cart. She wept, she moaned, she uttered cries, and all the time, for more than half an hour, she was climbing up that hill, dragging behind her with terrible efforts what was, without doubt, the ass's cart.

And someone was beating her harshly, for she said: "Oh! how you hurt me! At least do not beat me any more, I will go on—but don't beat me any more, I entreat you—I will do as you wish, but do not beat me any more!——"

Then her anguish gradually was calmed, and her

mind only wandered gently till dawn. Then she grew drowsy, and ended by falling asleep. When she awoke at about two o'clock in the afternoon, she was still feverish, but her reason had returned.

Yet until the next day her mind was dull, a little unsettled, and flighty. She could not find at once the words she wanted, and tired herself terribly in striving for them.

But after a night's rest she regained complete possession of herself.

Still she felt that she was changed, as if this crisis had transformed her soul. She suffered less and thought more. The terrible events that were so recent seemed to her to have fallen back into a remote past, and she looked upon them with a clearness of vision with which her mind had never before been enlightened. This light which had suddenly pervaded her, and which illumines some souls in certain hours of suffering, revealed to her life, men, events, and the whole world with all it contains, as she had never before beheld them.

Then, even more than on the night when, in her own room, she had felt so alone in the world, after returning from the lake of Tazenat, she deemed herself wholly forsaken in life. She perceived that all men go on side by side, through the events of life, without anything really uniting two beings together. She felt, because of the treachery of the one in whom she had put all her trust, that the others, all the others, would never be anything more to her than indifferent neighbors in this journey, long or short, sad or gay, onward through to-morrows that could not be forecast. She realized, that, even in the arms of that man, when she thought herself blended with him, when she thought that their bodies and souls were but one body and one soul, that they really

had only drawn a little nearer together, so that the impenetrable sheaths, in which mysterious nature has isolated and enclosed human beings, came in contact. She saw clearly that no one ever had or ever could break through that invisible barrier that places living beings as far from one another as the stars of the sky.

She divined the powerless effort, ceaseless since the first days of the world, the unwearying effort of men to tear away the sheath in which their soul struggles, forever imprisoned, forever solitary—an effort of arms, of lips, of eyes, of trembling flesh, an effort of love that exhausts itself in kisses and ends only by giving life to another desolate being!

Then she was seized by an irresistible longing to see her daughter again. She asked for her, and when they had brought her she begged them to undress it, as so far she had seen only its face.

The nurse then unrolled the swaddling clothes and revealed the poor little body of a new-born child, that was agitated by those vague movements that life instils in these rough drafts of human beings. Christiane touched with a timid, trembling hand, then wished to kiss it from head to foot, then she gazed at it, her mind filled with strange thoughts.

Two beings had met, had loved with exalted delight, and of their embrace this child had been born! It was both she and he, that would thus be blended until the death of this little child. It was both he and she, living again mingled, there was a little of him and a little of her with something unknown that would make it different from both of them. It reproduced them both in the character of its body and mind, in its traits, its gestures, its eyes, its motions, its tastes, its passions, even to the very tones

of its voice and its way of walking, and yet it would be a new being!

They themselves were separated now forever! Never again would their glances meet in one of those flashes of love that make the human race indestructible.

And, pressing the infant to her heart, she murmured: "Adieu—adieu!" It was to him that she said "adieu," whispering it in her baby's ear, the brave and heartbroken farewell of a proud soul, the farewell of a woman who will suffer yet for long, perhaps for always, but who will know, at least, how to hide from all her tears.

"Ah! ah!" cried William, through the half-open door. "I have caught you! Will you give me back my baby?"

Running up to the bed, he caught the little one up in his arms, which were already used to handling it, and as he lifted it up over his head, he kept saying:

"Good morning, Mademoiselle Andermatt—good morning, Mademoiselle Andermatt."

Christiane thought: "So this, then, is my husband." And she looked at him with surprised eyes, as though she were looking at him for the first time. It was he, the man to whom the law had united her, had given her! The man who should be, according to the religious and social ideas of mankind, a half of herself! more than that, her master, the master of her soul and body! She almost felt like smiling, all that, at this time, seemed to her so strange. For between herself and him no bond had ever existed, none of those bonds that are, alas! so quickly broken, but which seem eternal, ineffably sweet, almost divine.

She even felt no remorse for having deceived

him, for having betrayed him! She wondered at this, trying to seek the cause. Why was it? They were too different, no doubt, too remote from one another, of too unlike races. He understood nothing of her nature, she understood nothing of his. Yet he was good, devoted, affectionate.

But, perhaps, only beings of the same mold, of the same nature, and of the same moral essence could feel themselves bound to one another by the sacred chain of voluntary duty.

They dressed the child again. William had sat down.

"Listen, my darling," he said. "I don't dare announce any visitors to you since the welcome you gave Doctor Black. But yet there is one whom you would make me very happy by receiving; it is Doctor Bonnefille!"

Then for the first time, she laughed, a colorless laugh that lay on her lip and did not reach her soul, and she asked:

"Doctor Bonnefille? What a miracle! Are you reconciled?"

"Why, yes, listen. I am going to tell you a great secret, a great piece of news. I have just bought the old establishment. I have the whole place now. Hein! isn't that a victory? Of course poor old Bonnefille knew it before anyone. So he has been shrewd; he has come to inquire after you every day, leaving his card with a word of sympathy. As for me, I responded to his advances by a call; and now we are the best of friends."

"Let him come," said Christiane, "whenever he likes. I shall be glad to see him."

"That's good, thank you. I will bring him to see you to-morrow morning. I need not tell you that Paul is constantly intrusting me with a thou-

sand compliments for you, and he inquires a great deal after the baby. He wants very much to see her."

In spite of her resolutions, she felt oppressed. Yet she was able to say:

"You must give him my thanks, for me."

Andermatt went on:

"He was very anxious to know if his engagement had been announced to you. I told him yes; then he asked me several times what you thought about it?"

She made a great effort of will, and murmured:

"Tell him that I approve of it entirely."

William, with cruel pertinacity, went on:

"He wanted surely to know what you will name your daughter. I told him that we were undecided between Marguerite and Geneviève."

"I have changed my mind," she said. "I want to name her Arlette."

Months before, she had discussed with Paul the name they would choose for a son or for a daughter; and for a daughter they were undecided between Geneviève and Marguerite. She no longer wanted either of these two names.

William repeated:

"Arlette—Arlette. That's very nice—you are right. For my part, I would have liked to name her Christiane, after you. I adore that—Christiane!"

She gave a deep sigh.

"Ah! that foretells too much suffering to bear the name of the Crucified."

He blushed, not having thought at all of this connection, and rose.

"But then Arlette is very nice. Good-by, for a little while, darling."

As soon as he was gone, she called the nurse,

and told her from that time on to place the cradle by her bedside.

When the dainty bed, that looked like a light boat, always swinging and carrying its white curtain like a sail on its mast of twisted copper, had been rolled near to the large bed, Christiane stretched out her hand to the sleeping child and said very low: "Go bye-bye, my baby. You will never find anyone who will love you as much as I."

She passed the following days in a gentle melancholy, thinking a great deal, building up an unyielding soul and a forceful heart, to take up her life again in a few weeks. Now her chief occupation was gazing in her baby's eyes, trying to surprise there the first look of recognition, but seeing nothing except two bluish holes invariably turned towards the sunlight of the window.

And she felt again the most profound sadness as she thought that those eyes, still slumbering, would look upon the world as she herself had looked on it, through the illusion of an inner dream that makes the souls of young women happy, trusting and gay. Those eyes would love all that she had loved, the beautiful clear days, the flowers, the woods, and human beings also, alas! They would love a man, no doubt! They would love a man! They would bear in them his known and well-loved image, would see him again when he was distant, would kindle when he returned. And then—and then—they would learn to weep! Tears, dreadful tears would flow over those little cheeks! And the terrible grief of love that was betrayed, would make them unrecognizable, wild with anguish and despair, the poor wandering eyes, that would be blue.

And she took the baby in a wild embrace, and said: "Love only me, my child!"

At last, one day, Professor Mas-Roussel, who came to see her every morning, said:

"Later on, you can sit up for a little while, Madame."

Andermatt, when the doctor had gone, said to his wife:

"It is very unfortunate that you are not quite well, for we are going to try to-day a very interesting experiment at the establishment. Dr. Latonne has performed a real miracle on Père Clovis by having him take his treatment of self-moving gymnastics. Imagine it! This old vagabond walks now nearly as well as anyone. Besides, the progress of the cure is evident after each sitting."

She asked, to please him:

"And are you going to have a public exhibition?"

"Yes and no. We are going to have a clinic before the doctors and a few friends."

"At what time?"

"At three o'clock."

"Will Monsieur Bretigny be there?"

"Yes, yes. He promised me that he would come. All the Board will be there. From a medical standpoint, it is very curious."

"Well," she said, "as I shall just then be up, will you ask Monsieur Bretigny to come and see me. He can entertain me while you are looking at the experiment."

"Yes, my darling."

"You won't forget?"

"No, no, don't worry." And he went to look up the spectators.

After he had been fooled by the Oriols at the time of the first treatment of the paralytic, he had in his turn imposed on the credulity of the invalids, who

are so easy to convince when it's a question of cure, and now he imposed on himself the farce of this cure, speaking of it so often, with so much enthusiasm and conviction that it would have been very difficult for him to have determined whether he believed it or did not believe it.

About three o'clock all the persons whom he had enlisted were gathered in front of the door of the establishment, awaiting the coming of Père Clovis. He arrived leaning on two canes and dragging his legs, and bowed politely to everybody along the way. The two Oriols followed him with the two young girls. Paul and Gontran were escorting their fiancées.

Dr. Latonne was waiting in the large hall where the articulated instruments were installed. He was talking with Andermatt and with Dr. Honorat.

When he perceived Père Clovis, a smile of delight passed over his smooth-shaven lips. He asked:

"Well! how are we to-day?"

"Oh, pretty well, pretty well!"

Petrus Martel and Saint-Landri appeared. They wanted to know the facts. The former believed, the latter doubted. Behind them to everyone's amazement, Dr. Bonnefille came in, who bowed to his rival and shook hands with Andermatt.

"Well, Messieurs and Mesdemoiselles," said Dr. Latonne, bowing towards Louise and Charlotte Oriol, "you are going to assist at a very curious spectacle. Observe first before the experiment that this good man walks a little, but very little. Can you walk without your sticks, Père Clovis?"

"Oh, no! *Môchieu.*"

"Very good, we will commence."

They hoisted the old fellow into the armchair, strapped his legs to the movable feet of the seat, then

when the inspector said: "Start gently," the attendant, with his arm bared, turned the lever.

Then they saw the vagabond's right knee rise, stretch out, bend and stretch out again, then the left knee did the same. Père Clovis filled with sudden mirth commenced to laugh and kept time, with his head and his long white beard, with all the movements that his legs were made to make.

The four physicians and Andermatt, bent over him and examined him with the solemnity of augurs, while Colosse exchanged mischievous winks with the old rascal.

As the doors had been left open, other people kept coming in all the time, bathers who were convinced and anxiously pressed forward to see. "Faster," ordered Dr. Latonne. The workman turned faster. The old man's legs began to run, and he himself, seized with irresistible mirth, like a child that is tickled, laughed with all his might, as he wagged his head wildly. And he kept calling out in the midst of his bursts of laughter: "It's a *rigolo,* it's a *rigolo!*" having no doubt picked up this word from the lips of some foreigner.

Colosse in his turn was bursting with laughter, and stamping his foot on the ground, and slapping his sides with his hands, he cried:

"Ah! *bougrrre* of a Cloviche—*bougrrre* of a Cloviche."

"Enough!" said the inspector.

Then the spectators saw Père Clovis get up alone from his armchair; and he walked. He took short steps, it is true, and was all bent over, and made faces with fatigue at every effort! but he walked!

Dr. Bonnefille was the first to speak:

"It's a case that is altogether remarkable."

Dr. Black at once went beyond his colleague in his praise. Dr. Honorat alone said nothing.

Gontran whispered in Paul's ear:

" I don't see through it. Look at their faces. Are they dupes or fawners? "

But Andermatt was talking. He related the history of this cure from the very first day, the relapse and the final cure that was definite and absolutely certain. He added gaily:

" And if our patient is taken again with his pains every winter, we will cure him up again every summer."

Then he made a pompous eulogy on the waters of Mont-Oriol, and praised their properties, all their properties:

" I myself," he said, "have seen an instance of their efficacy in the case of one who is very dear to me, and if my family does not die out, it will be due to Mont-Oriol."

But all at once he was seized with a recollection. He had promised his wife Paul Bretigny's visit. His regret was keen, as he was full of affectionate care for her. So he looked around him, saw Paul, rejoined him, and said:

" My dear friend, I completely forgot to tell you that Christiane is now waiting to see you."

Bretigny faltered: " Me—at this moment?——"

" Yes, she is sitting up to-day and she wanted to see you before anybody else. So run over quickly, and excuse my forgetfulness."

Paul went towards the hotel, his heart throbbing with emotion.

On the way he met the Marquis de Ravenel who said to him:

" My daughter is up and is astonished not to have seen you yet."

However, he paused on the lowest steps of the stairway to think what he would say to her. How would she receive him? Would she be alone? If she spoke about his engagement what should he reply?

Since he had known that she was ill, he could not think of her without trembling with anxiety; and every time the thought of their first meeting passed through his mind it made him suddenly flush or grow pale with anxiety. He was thinking, too, with deep emotion of this unknown child of which he was the father, and he was harassed with longing and fear to see it. He felt that he had sunken into one of those sloughs that stain a man's conscience till death. But he dreaded above all the glance of this woman whom he had loved so intensely, for such a short time.

Would she meet him with reproaches, tears, or contempt? Would she only receive him to drive him away?

And what should be his attitude towards her. Humble, grieved, entreating, or cold? Should he explain himself, or listen without answering? Should he sit or stand?

And when they showed him the child, what should he do? What should he say? With what feeling should he seem to be agitated?

He paused again in front of the door, and just as he was going to ring the bell, he saw that his hand was trembling.

However, he pressed his finger against the little ivory button, and he heard the jingling of the electric bell inside the apartment.

A maid came to open the door and asked him in. And from the parlor door, he saw at the end of the second room, Christiane who was lying on her invalid chair and was looking at him.

These two rooms that he had to cross seemed to him interminable. He felt he was staggering, he was afraid of knocking against the chairs, and he dared not look at his feet, for fear of casting down his eyes. She did not make any gesture, she did not say a word, she waited until he was near her. Her right hand lay stretched out on her dress, and her left hand rested on the edge of the cradle all surrounded with curtains.

When he was three steps from her, he paused, not knowing what he should do. The maid had closed the door behind him.

They were alone.

Then he longed to fall on his knees and beg her pardon. But she slowly raised her hand which lay on her dress, and, extending it slightly towards him, said: "Good morning," in a grave tone.

He did not dare to take her hand, although he touched it lightly with his lips, as he bowed. She added:

"Sit down."

He sat on a low chair near her feet.

He felt he ought to talk, but he could not find a word, not a thought, and he no longer even dared to look at her. Yet at last he stammered:

"Your husband had forgotten to tell me that you were waiting for me or I should have come sooner."

She replied:

"Oh! it doesn't matter at what moment we should see one another again—a little sooner—a little later!—"

As she added nothing, he hastened to ask:

"You are better now, I hope?"

"Thank you. As well as one can be after such shocks."

She was very pale, thinner, but prettier than be-

fore. Her eyes especially had acquired a depth of expression that he had never seen in them before. They seemed of a darker hue, of a less clear blue, less transparent, more intense. Her hands were so white that they seemed like death.

She went on: "Those are hours hard to live through. But when one has suffered so, one feels strong till the end of one's days."

Strongly moved, he murmured: "Yes, they are terrible ordeals."

She repeated like an echo: "Terrible."

For some moments, slight moments, those almost imperceptible sounds of a child wakening from sleep had come from the cradle. Bretigny did not take his eyes from it, he was a prey to a painful, increasing uneasiness, and was tortured by the desire to see the child that was lying within.

Then he saw that the curtains of the little bed were fastened above and below with the gold pins that Christiane usually used to wear in her dress. He had often amused himself in bygone days by unpinning them and fastening them again on the shoulders of his beloved, these fine pins with heads shaped like crescents. He understood what she wished; and a keen emotion seized him, and made him shrink before this barrier of golden pins, which separated him forever from this child. A soft cry, a faint wail rose from this white prison. Christiane at once rocked the little cradle, and said a little hastily:

"I ask your pardon for giving you so little time, but I must attend to my daughter."

He rose, kissed once more the hand that she held out to him, and just as he was leaving, she said:

"I pray for your happiness."

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